

**Studies in contemporary Australian
sculptural practice:
Hilarie Mais and Fiona Hall**

AE Sanders

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Canberra

November 2004

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Synopsis

The subject of this thesis is contemporary Australian sculptural practice. Within the limitations of a Master of Arts sub-thesis, it aims to provide an analysis of developments in contemporary Australian sculptural practice since 1980. This analysis is conducted within the context of the theoretical frameworks of postmodernism, feminism and postcolonialism.

The first chapter seeks to establish a general overview and context, both nationally and internationally, for the significant changes and developments in contemporary sculptural practice in Australia. Specifically, three key theoretical concepts are identified as major protagonists of these changes. The second and third chapters seek to provide specific examples of these theoretical concepts identified in chapter one within the context of two monographic case studies of mid career sculptors, Hilarie Mais and Fiona Hall.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to provide an analysis of developments in contemporary Australian sculptural practice since 1980 through the study of the works of two Australian, mid-career, women sculptors. This analysis is conducted within the context of the theoretical framework of postmodern, feminist and postcolonial discourses. This intellectual framework provides a foundation upon which significant developments, within the selected sculptors' oeuvres, can be discussed and examined.

This thesis does not attempt to provide a definition of sculpture, nor does it attempt to describe the full variety of forms that fall within the rubric of sculpture and installation. A number of areas that are outside the scope of this thesis have affected developments in contemporary Australian sculpture. These include the impact on Australia's cultural sector of market deregulation, major international political shifts, especially the end of the Cold War and the increasing worldwide dominance of American power. These issues have had consequences for developments within Australian politics from the late 1980s to mid-1990s and have contributed to the powerful, political shifts in these debates that have occurred since 1996. Other issues specific to sculptural practice that are not covered in this thesis include changes in government funding policy which influenced public art and corporate commissioning of works, particularly sculpture.

Within the constraints of 30,000 words, the monographic studies provide a context within which the impact of postmodernism, feminism and postcolonialism are examined. The two artists selected are both mid-career practitioners, with substantial bodies of work produced continuously during the period under examination. Given the significance of these artists' work, neither Fiona Hall nor Hilarie Mais have received the substantial critical appraisal that their work deserves. Although there will be a major survey of Fiona Hall's work at the Queensland Art Gallery in 2005 and there was a more modest survey of Hilarie Mais's work of the past thirty years at the Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, in 2004, this thesis aims to provide a particular theoretical analysis of both sculptors' work. This thesis has identified important influences, either not previously acknowledged or not investigated in depth, within the work of the selected sculptors. The theoretical analysis of the artists' works also provides an insight into the changes and developments taking place in the larger field of contemporary Australian sculptural practice.

METHODOLOGY

The thesis will investigate the changing modalities of sculpture from 1980 onwards within the context of a postmodernist framework. The emergence of postmodern discourses within the visual arts marked the materialisation of a multiplicity of hybrid forms resulting from the collapse of rigid definitions based on medium. Critical concepts such as the author discourse, issues of repetition and difference, and strategies such as “appropriation, site-specificity, impermanence, accumulation, discursivity, hybridisation...(which) characterise much of the art of the present and distinguish it from its modernist predecessors” are addressed within the context of the selected sculptors’ works.¹

Possibly, the “regendering” of sculptural practice has been the single most striking impact of the power of feminist discourse of the 1970s.² It “probably eroded the hegemony of the Formalesque more than any...other factors” and helped to “establish new valuing systems in opposition to the dominant masculine values.”³ By the 1980s, early, political feminism had been branded as ‘essentialist’ by the emerging postmodernist discourse. Nevertheless, as feminism was integrated within Australian university curricula, a more critical and sophisticated discourse developed, with a number of Australian feminist theorists coming to prominence in the late 1980s.

Feminism had resuscitated interest in handcraft and traditional skills that were associated with the previously invisible world of women. This resulted in an expansion of mediums and practices that now fell within the ambit of sculpture; ceramics, textiles, modelling and assemblage. Women came to regard sculpture as a flexible art form allowing them to work across mediums. Sculptural flexibility in women’s hands also extended to the materials used; malleable, mutable and impermanent materials such as paper, fabric, magnetic recording tape and plants as opposed to the traditions of permanence, importance and hardness of marble, welded steel, bronze and stone. The work of theorists such as Julia Kristeva, Elizabeth Grosz, Judith Butler and Marsha Meskimmon are employed to explore works by Mais and Hall within a feminist context.

¹ Craig Owens, “The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a theory of Postmodernism”, Brian Wallis (ed), *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1984, p.209

² Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000, p.357

³ Bernard Smith, *Modernism’s History*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1998, p.297

The influence of postcolonial discourse, in particular its interrogations of identity and place (and related issues of displacement and ecological disturbances) has become part of the critical framework of many Australian sculptors and installation artists.

Postmodernist and feminist discourses traced the fracturing of the singular, dominant Western representation of the world, thus enabling Australian artists to challenge their own cultural constructs in relation to Australian history, landscape and ecosystems. A number of young, urban Aboriginal artists came to prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s whose works made use of postmodernist strategies to challenge issues of representation and address political concerns of place and identity. Yet the most powerful postcolonial statement by Aboriginal artists emerged from Ramingining in the Northern Territory in the form of *The Aboriginal Memorial*, 1988. Conceived as a war memorial, to commemorate two hundred years of white settlement and the hundreds of thousands of Aboriginal deaths during this period, it was commissioned for the Bicentennial Biennale of Sydney and later presented to the National Gallery of Australia.⁴

Dialogue between artists, curators and critics within the Asia Pacific region, through artist exchanges, residencies, touring exhibitions and the Asia-Pacific Triennials at the Queensland Art Gallery grew exponentially from the late 1980s. This level of exchange and discussion offered new perspectives on shared, colonial histories as well as defining an increasingly sophisticated, postcolonial critique of art created outside the traditional centres of Europe and America. A postcolonial reading of Fiona Hall's work throughout the 1990s is both relevant and essential. Paul Carter's proposition of spatial history in relation to the process of European settlement in Australia is a key aspect in considering the postcolonial and environmental framework within which Fiona Hall's later works are conceived and described.⁵

⁴ Djon Mundine, "World of Dreamings, The Aboriginal Memorial: We Have Survived", National Gallery of Australia, <<http://www.nga.gov.au/Dreaming/Index.cfm?Refnc=Ch2a>> accessed 24 November 2004.

⁵ Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, Faber and Faber, London, 1987.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Literature on International Sculpture and the Australian context

Influential American magazines *Artforum* and *Arts International* included the discussion of the work of many of the key artists and the critical discourse from late modernism, minimalism and early postmodernism. *Artforum* is still in publication. *October*, a scholarly review founded by a number of leading critics including Rosalind Krauss and published by MIT Press, was another source of some of the earliest critiques that embraced a postmodernist critical framework. *Studio International* was a particularly useful source of information on British abstract constructivism when researching Hilarie Mais's artistic influences and theoretical background. The American magazine *Sculpture* was also a source of valuable review articles particularly Matthew Kangas's article, "Greenberg's Dream: The rise and fall of Modernist Sculpture", published in 2002.

Major texts which discuss the movements and developments in sculptural practice in Europe and America during the twentieth century included Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*; Kynaston McShine's catalogue, *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*; Robert Goldwater's, *What is Modern Sculpture?*, and Maurice Tuchman's exhibition catalogue of *American Sculpture of the Sixties* produced for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.⁶ Texts that concentrated on particular theoretical aspects or movements within the field of sculptural practice in the 1960s and 1970s included Richard Williams, *After Modern Sculpture*; Rosalind Krauss's, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* and *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other modernist myths* (which contained her much quoted essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field"); Lucy Lippard's, *Six Years: The Dematerialisation of The Art Object 1966 – 1972* and *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism* and *Conceptual art: Theory, Myth and Practice* by Michael Corris.⁷

⁶ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000; *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984; Robert Goldwater, *What is Modern Sculpture?*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1969; *American Sculpture of the Sixties*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 1967.

⁷ Richard Williams, *After Modern Sculpture: Art in the United States and Europe 1965-70*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2000 ; Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1977 and *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other modernist myths*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts and London, 1985; Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialisation of The Art Object 1966 – 1972*, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1973 and *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism*, E.P. Dutton, New York 1971; Michael Corris, *Conceptual art: Theory, Myth and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

Publications on Minimalism that were useful sources include Frances Colpitt's, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* and Geoffrey Battcock's, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, which included Michael Fried's essay, "Art and Objecthood".⁸ Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev study of *Arte Povera* was particularly useful in relation to the practice of a number of Australian *informe* artists such as John Davis and their works at the Mildura Sculpture Triennials held during the 1970s; the exhibition catalogues, *Starlit Waters* and *British Sculpture of the 20th Century*, and Terry Neff's book, *A Quiet Revolution: British Sculpture since 1965* provided valuable insight into the differences between British and American theoretical and sculptural practices between the 1960s to 1980s.⁹ This difference is relevant to and noted in the case study of Hilarie Mais's work.

Literature on Australian sculptural practice

A bibliographic search of publications on Australian sculpture reveals that since Graeme Sturgeon's final publication, *Contemporary Australian Sculpture*, completed in 1989 shortly before his death and covering the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, there has been no major critical evaluation of the entire field.¹⁰ The other influential publication also published by Sturgeon in 1976 was *The Development of Australian Sculpture 1788-1975*.¹¹ He had a particular view of what defined 'sculpture' which he discussed in some detail in his curatorial selection criteria for the *Australian Sculpture Now: 2nd Australian Sculpture Triennial*.¹² Hence there were many other forms, and artists working within the rapidly expanding field of 'sculpture', that were not included in his book. Ken Scarlett published a comprehensive biographical listing entitled, *Australian Sculptors* in 1980, which only covered those sculptors known to practice up to the 1970s.¹³ Two other publications released in the early 1990s that focussed on particular

⁸ Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1990; Geoffrey Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, E.P Dutton, New York, 1968.

⁹ Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera*, Phaidon, London, 1999; *Starlit Waters: British Sculpture An International Art, 1968-1988*, Tate Gallery Liverpool, Liverpool, 1988; Sandy Nairne and Nicholas Serota, *British Sculpture of the 20th Century*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1981 and Terry Neff, *A Quiet Revolution: British Sculpture since 1965*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1987.

¹⁰ Graeme Sturgeon, *Contemporary Australian Sculpture*, Craftsman House, Roseville, 1991.

¹¹ Graeme Sturgeon, *The Development of Australian Sculpture 1788-1975*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1978.

¹² Graeme Sturgeon, *Australian Sculpture Now: 2nd Australian Sculpture Triennial*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1984.

¹³ Ken Scarlett, *Australian Sculptors*, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1980.

aspects of sculpture in Australia were Ken Scarlett's *Contemporary Sculpture in Australian Gardens* and Michael Hedger's *Public Sculpture in Australia*.¹⁴ Both these publications are useful documents but do not offer a detailed scholarly critique on their stated subjects, nor do they purport to do so. There have also been a number of monographs and exhibition catalogues on individual sculptors in Australia published since 1980.

Possibly the most informative sources of what was happening in Australian sculpture from 1961 to 1993 were the *Mildura Sculpture Award and Triennial* catalogues and following the demise of the Mildura Triennials, the *Australian Sculpture Triennials*. Catalogues of the *Biennale of Sydney* (since 1973) and *Australian Perspecta* (1981-1999) are also valuable records. The *Biennale* catalogues are also useful records on international participants and in some cases trends, which were being profiled in Australia. The *Perspecta* catalogues, particularly during the 1990s when these exhibitions explored nominated themes, sought to identify conceptual trends and increasingly included installations as an exhibiting mode. Further history and analysis of developments and changes in Australian sculpture from the 1970s onwards are contained in general surveys of art such as *Anything Goes: Art in Australia from 1970-1980* and *Peripheral Vision: Contemporary Australian Art from 1970 – 1990*.¹⁵ Other sources of information, analysis and review are the various art magazines: *Art and Australia*, *Art Monthly Australia*, *Art & Text* and *Artlink* as well as various craft magazines and arts' organisations publications.

Although *What is Installation? An anthology of writings on Australian installation art*, published in 2001, sets out to chart the various, shifting conceptual and art practice territories of installation as opposed to object based works, the editors describe the subject of the anthology as “the debate over the intervention between space, object and meaning.”¹⁶ Clearly within the anthology, installation and its elision with sculpture is a

¹⁴ Ken Scarlett, *Contemporary Sculpture in Australian Gardens*, Gordon and Breach Arts International, Roseville East, 1993 and Michael Hedger, *Public Sculpture in Australia*, Gordon and Breach Arts International, Roseville East, 1995.

¹⁵ Paul Taylor (ed), *Anything Goes: Art in Australia from 1970-1980*, Art & Text, Melbourne, 1984 and Charles Green, *Peripheral Vision: Contemporary Australian Art from 1970 – 1990*, Craftsman House, Roseville, 1995.

¹⁶ Adam Gezcy and Benjamin Genocchio (eds), 2001 'Introduction' pp.1-7, *What is Installation? An anthology of writings on Australian installation art*, Power Publications, Sydney, p.3

contested area, as one quote rhetorically states, “with Installation we are surely principally dealing with manifestations involved in sculpture.”¹⁷

Literature on Theory

Texts that provided a useful art historical and theoretical overview included Robert Williams, *Art Theory: An Historical Introduction*; Eric Fernie, *Art History and its methods: a critical anthology*; and Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction*.¹⁸ Publications that were invaluable in providing access to primary source articles were *Art in Theory 1900 – 1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968 – 2000* and *The Post-Modern Reader*.¹⁹

Anthologies and publications that specifically addressed postmodernist theoretical concerns included *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, a selection of critical essays; *Postmodern Perspectives: Issues in Contemporary Art*, and two publications edited by Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture* and *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*.²⁰ Not in keeping with this particular theoretical direction was Dame Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, published in 1966, which was particularly relevant to Fiona Hall’s case study of her postmodernist photographic works of the 1980s.²¹

¹⁷ Julie Ewington, ‘In the Wild: Nature, Culture, Gender in Installation Art’, *What is Installation? An anthology of writings on Australian installation art*, *ibid.*, p.43

¹⁸ Robert Williams, *Art Theory: An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2004; Eric Fernie (ed), *Art History and its methods: a critical anthology*, Phaidon Press, London, 1995 and Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001.

¹⁹ Charles Harrison and Paul Woods (eds), *Art in Theory 1900 – 1990*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1992; Hilary Robinson(ed), *An Anthology of Changing Ideas, Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968 – 2000*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 2001 and Charles Jencks (ed), *The Post-Modern Reader*, Academy Editions, London, 1992.

²⁰ Brian Wallis (ed), *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, Documentary Sources in Contemporary Art, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1984; Howard Risatti (ed), *Postmodern Perspectives: Issues in Contemporary Art*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1990; Hal Foster (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture*, The New Press, New York, 1998 and *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*, Bay Press, Port Townsend, Washington, 1985.

²¹ Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966

Feminist theoretical texts that provided historical as well as theoretical background material included Rosie Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference*; Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic approach to Literature and Art*; Marsha Meskimmon's recently published book, *Women making art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*; and, Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollack, *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970 – 1985*.²² Of particular note is Thalia Gouma-Peterson's exhibition catalogue and monograph, *Miriam Schapiro: shaping the fragments of art and life* and Susan Stoops's exhibition catalogue, *More than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70s*.²³ These two catalogues formed part of the research into feminist influences in Hilarie Mais's work.

Australian feminist texts referred to include *Australian Feminism* edited by Barbara Caine; Elizabeth Grosz's, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*; Rosalyn Diprose's, *The Bodies of Women: Ethics, Embodiment and Sexual Difference*; and *Dissonance: Feminism and the Arts 1970 – 90* edited by Catriona Moore.²⁴ A special issue of the feminist journal, *Hypatia*, was published in Spring 2000 and contained papers from an international conference held at the University of Warwick, Britain, 1998 entitled, *Going Australian: Reconfiguring Feminism and Philosophy*. The analytical frameworks that Australian feminist philosophy has sought to employ encourage the need "to use the specific histories and geographies of exclusion as a means of moving beyond boundaries".²⁵ This particular Australian version of feminism is relevant to Fiona Hall's work and her postcolonial investigations.

²² Thalia Gouma-Peterson, *Miriam Schapiro: shaping the fragments of art and life*, Harry N Abrams in association with Polk Museum, New York, 1999 and Susan Stoops (ed), *More than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70s*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1996.

²³ Rosie Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994; Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic approach to Literature and Art*, translated by Alice Jardine, Leon S. Roudiez and Thomas Gora, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980; Marsha Meskimmon, *Women making art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*, Routledge, London, 2003 and Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollack, *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970 – 1985*, Pandora Press, London, 1987.

²⁴ Barbara Caine, *Australian Feminism: A companion*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998; Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, 1994; Rosalyn Diprose, *The Bodies of Women: Ethics, Embodiment and Sexual Difference*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994; Catriona Moore (ed), *Dissonance: Feminism and the Arts 1970 – 1990*, Allen and Unwin in association with Artspace, St. Leonards, 1994.

²⁵ Christine Battersby, "Learning to Think Intercontinentally: Finding Australian Routes", *Hypatia* Vol.15 No.2 Spring, 2000, Academic Research Library, p.1

Postcolonial critiques appear in a number of the early issues of the magazine, *Art AsiaPacific* and in the lively, contested forums associated with the Asia-Pacific Triennials. Although not referred to directly in this thesis, the journal, *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on contemporary Art and Culture*, provides critical postcolonial analysis and discussion from sources outside the usual European and American centres of cultural debate. General postcolonial publications that offered an overview of the field include *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* and Leela Gandhi's, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*.²⁶ Of specific interest to this thesis were Nicholas Thomas's *Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture*, and Paul Carter's, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, which was particularly useful for understanding some of the implications in Fiona Hall's later works.²⁷

Feminist art publications

Publications from the early 1990s that included women sculptors and ceramicists as part of an overview of feminist art in Australia were Janine Burke's *Field of Vision* and Sandy Kirby's *Sight Lines*.²⁸ *Dissonance-Aspects of Feminism and Art*, a collection of essays which celebrated twenty years of Australian feminism was published in 1994 three years after the exhibitions and forums co-ordinated throughout Australia by Artspace curator Sally Couacaud, in Sydney. All three publications offered a detailed history and critique of Australian feminism and art from 1970s to 1990s.

²⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995 and Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998.

²⁷ Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1993 and Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, Faber and Faber, London, 1987, Reprint, 1988 paperback.

²⁸ Janine Burke, *Field of Vision: A Decade of Change*, Viking, Melbourne, 1990 and Sandy Kirby, *Sight Lines: Women's Art and Feminist Perspectives in Australia*, Craftsman House BVI Ltd, Tortola, 1992.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

Chapter One, Setting the Scene

Chapter One presents an overview of developments within sculpture in Australia since the 1980s from a national perspective while acknowledging international influences. The theoretical framework maps the influence of postmodern, feminist and postcolonial discourses on an emerging and vastly changed landscape of contemporary sculpture thus identifying these contexts as relevant tools for investigating the major shifts and developments within contemporary Australian sculptural practice.

Chapter Two, Case Study: Hilarie Mais

Within this chapter's investigation of Mais's sculptural practice from the 1980s to the present, particular works are discussed in the contexts of postmodernism and feminism. Unlike Fiona Hall, Hilarie Mais's work does not specifically identify with postcolonial or environmental contexts, so these will not be considered within this chapter.

In considering Mais's work within a postmodernist context, the shift from the late modernist proposition of the autonomy of a work of art and the position of the artist as the primary conveyor of meaning, to the postmodernist understanding where the artwork is open to multiple interpretations, are examined. The key references that are drawn upon to examine Mais's work in a postmodernist context are Roland Barthes' essay "Death of the Author" and Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?". Both these dissertations within the author discourse were written in the later 1960s and translated into English in the 1970s. They made a major contribution to the postmodern, theoretical foundations underlying the processes of examining and expanding contemporary art practice.²⁹

The feminist context within which selected Mais works will be analysed draws upon the writings of Bulgarian-born, French theorist, Julia Kristeva. The three essays that inform this discussion include "Giotto's Joy" first published in French in 1972, "Motherhood

²⁹ Roland Barthes's essay, "Death of the Author", was originally published in 1968. Parts of the essay are quoted in Robert Williams, *Art Theory An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p.241. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" was originally published in 1969 and is quoted in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1992, pp. 923 – 928.

according to Giovanni Bellini” published in French in 1975 and “Powers of Horror”, originally published in 1980.³⁰ All three essays were translated into English in the early 1980s. Kristeva’s psychoanalytically based feminist theory identifies the repressed feminine or semiotic as “function(ing) within symbolic systems as a resistant, subversive, wayward energy”.³¹ She identifies the maternal body as “a threshold where ‘nature’ confronts ‘culture’”, the primary site of repression, unrepresentable and therefore in modernist terms, unrepresentable.³² For her, it is at this abject threshold that ambiguities are reconciled. Kristeva’s poetic writing, in two of the essays which discuss visual art, offer particular insights into a feminist reading of Mais’s mother/daughter cycle works. Kristeva’s understanding of the transgressive qualities of colour is useful for understanding the tensions that Mais aims to reconcile in her work

Chapter Three, Case Study: Fiona Hall

Hall’s early work in the 1980s was primarily photographic assemblage, using a variety of found and collaged objects and materials. The resultant images were often based on the canon of Western art’s key historical and literary works. Hall has always been interested in human systems of meaning and our attempts to create order and rationality out of chaos. Her works reflect a fine intellect, cognisant of Western literary and philosophical traditions with a particular and extensive knowledge of natural history and botany. This is the ‘wax tablet’ upon which her craft skills and sensual touch combine with an acid and ironic wit and shape into sculpture. In her beautifully crafted work, *Paradisus Terrestris* 1989, she inverts Linnaeus’s rational and sexualised system of botanical classifications of common flowers and trees into a highly charged, erotic peep-show of human sexual organs and congress. A later series, *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled* 1996, employed native Australian flora with a triple naming system, reclaiming and acknowledging lost Aboriginal naming systems reinstating them alongside the botanical

³⁰ “Giotto’s Joy” first published in *Peinture*, January, 1972 and “Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini” first published in *Peinture*, December 1975. Both these articles are included in Julia Kristeva, *Desire for Language: A semiotic approach to Literature and Art*, translated by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S.Roudiez, Columbia University Press, 1980. “Pouvoirs de l’Horreur” published in 1980 in Paris and translated by Leon S Roudiez as *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, New York, 1982

³¹ Elizabeth Grosz, “Feminist theory and the politics of art” in Catriona Moore (ed), *Dissonance: Feminism and the arts 1970-90*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, 1994, p.149

³² Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A semiotic approach to Literature and Art*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980, p.238

and common English names. Over the past ten years, she has conducted “a rigorous interrogation of the settlement, cultivation and colonisation of Australia.”³³ This horizon has recently been extended, through residencies and exchanges, to engage with larger shared, postcolonial issues, particularly in her collaborative project with Indian installation artist, Nalini Milani, entitled, *Global Liquidity* and her recent ongoing project, *Leaf Litter*, begun at the Sri Lankan garden estate of Lunuganga.

Summary

This thesis does not attempt to address the full range of contemporary Australian sculptural practice; rather, it offers an investigation of the impact of three important theoretical discourses on developments in contemporary Australian sculptural practice through the study of the work of two substantial mid-career, women sculptors.

³³ Deborah Edwards, ‘Transported/Transplanted: Fiona Hall’s *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie*’ pp.264-267, *Art and Australia* Vol. 39 No.2 2001, p.264

CHAPTER ONE

Setting the Scene

Chapter One

Setting the Scene

Chapter One presents an overview of, and context for, developments within sculptural practice in Australia from 1980 to 2001. The theoretical framework maps the influence of postmodern, feminist and postcolonial discourses on an emerging and vastly changed landscape of contemporary sculpture. A brief overview of contemporary Australian sculpture provides a context within which to view these three discourses as relevant tools for investigating the major shifts and developments within contemporary Australian sculptural practice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework underpinning this thesis provides a context for three, key conceptual discourses that have had a major impact on the production, interpretation and reception of the visual arts, and upon contemporary sculptural practice in particular. The timeframe selected, from 1980 to 2001, accords with the currency of these three discourses within contemporary Australian art practice and the period during which the work of the two selected sculptors achieved maturity.

There are three reasons for selecting postmodernism, feminism and postcolonialism as the particular discourses to support this thesis's theoretical framework. Firstly, both artists clearly identify these discourses as having had significant influences on their art practice. For Hilarie Mais, it was predominantly feminism and postmodernism that have been significant, while for Fiona Hall, all three discourses have been important in her conceptual approach to her practice. In this thesis, the theoretical framework has been mapped through monographic studies of each sculptor, where particular works are investigated within the context of each discourse.

Secondly, these intellectual discourses have been significant channels for thought about how to respond to major political, economic and cultural shifts that have taken place globally since the late 1960s. Within the broader visual arts and cultural fields, they have had significant influence and impact on art practice: the way that art is received and interpreted and, on institutional selection processes. These discourses reflected major cultural and historical developments during the period under examination and offered a vehicle for artists to understand and deal with the impacts in their own lives of the major shifts and fractures in Western culture during this period.

Thirdly, these three discourses also describe a particular historical period from the late 1960s till 2001. The current global economic, political and cultural shifts in response to the events of September 11, 2001 signal major changes and new alignments that have ruptured the previous world view. In Australia, this is signalled by, among a range of issues, the demise of the republic debate and reconciliation, both issues once regarded as important to the definition of a national identity. It seems apt to review this period when postmodernism, feminism and postcolonialism were important to the conceptualisation of contemporary art, and within the specific field of contemporary Australian sculpture.

There are many, equally important theoretical discourses that have not been discussed within this particular theoretical framework. Some of these include neo-liberalism/globalisation, multiculturalism and identity politics, including queer theory. These discourses essentially remain outside the scope of this thesis as the research has shown that they are not as significant as the selected discourses are to the work of Hilarie Mais and Fiona Hall. Nevertheless, this thesis asserts that the three selected discourses are indicative of significant developments in contemporary Australian sculptural practice during the period under examination.

In order to locate this theoretical framework within developments in Australian sculptural practice since 1980, it is important to place the emergence of the three selected discourses within the context of major developments and movements that have taken place in sculpture in Europe and America since World War Two. From the perspective of these discourses, the 1960s and 1970s were foundational decades, specifically the period from 1968, with the student riots in Europe and America to the oil crisis of 1974, which signalled the end of an epoch of unchallenged, European economic and political dominance.

The postmodernist framework embraces a number of discourses. Most significant to the late 1960s and early 1970s was the foundational work done by a number of French poststructuralist theorists including Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. All three developed the notion that meaning in a text or artwork was not stable and no longer resided in one place or with one author, rather, through Derrida's deconstructive methodology, a multi-dimensional space of many disparate voices was opened up. As Barthes stated, "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death

of the author” thus offering an “anti-hierarchical conception of the production of meaning”.¹ However, despite the effectiveness of this new theoretical framework, it was in some ways perceived as a master narrative emanating from the European centre, perhaps a desperate endgame to retain dominance. Poststructuralist theories and methodology were used and extended by feminist and postcolonial theorists to develop more sophisticated analyses in support of feminist and postcolonist discourses, even though there was suspicion within both of these discourses directed at the ‘universalising’ propositions of post-structuralism that denied specificity, identity and place.

The second wave of feminism brought about economic emancipation and control of sexuality, especially of reproduction, to women in the Western world in the 1960s. Feminism entered a more politically active phase in the 1970s in trying to raise women’s participation in political, economic and cultural spheres of influence. Feminism was a powerful political and consciousness-raising force that entered the artworld in the 1970s and had some of its greatest art proponents in North America, England and Australia. It was in part responsible for the rapid increase not only in the numbers of women practising art but also, through lobbying, of the increase in the number of women artists included in institutional selection processes and exhibited in commercial galleries. From the 1980s, under theoretical fire from emerging postmodernism and a critique of ‘essentialism’, feminism employed interdisciplinary, poststructuralist methodologies to extend and develop a more sophisticated, theoretical framework.

In Australia, “the emergence of a highly committed feminist art during the 1970s probably eroded the hegemony of the Formalesque (modernism) more than any of the other factors” and enabled feminism “to establish new valuing systems in opposition to the dominant masculine values that had prevailed for centuries in the production of art in the special sense”.² Whereas the feminist movement that emerged in Australia was a grass-roots movement, post-structuralist theories and their interpretations by art critics, were largely imported and arrived in Australia in the early 1980s. Nevertheless, as Bernard Smith points out, it was the interrogative and interventionist work on the

¹ The first quote is from Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, Fontana, London, 1977, p.148 cited in Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, Macmillan Press, London, 1981, p.117. The second quote is from Charles Harrison and Paul Woods (eds), *Art in Theory 1900 – 1990: an anthology of changing ideas*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, p.941

² Bernard Smith, *Modernism’s History*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1998, p.297

institutions of art by feminists in Australia in the 1970s, that provided the root stock for a variety of postmodern and postcolonial discourses to be grafted onto.

As Leela Gandhi noted, "it is through poststructuralism and postmodernism... that postcolonialism starts to distil its particular provenance".³ Postcolonial discourse drew on the poststructuralist methodology of deconstructing master narratives and the strategies of the feminists in 1970. Homi Bhabha's quote reveals the importance of using existing methodology as a framework to extend and develop the postcolonial discourse: "The very language of cultural community needs to be rethought from a postcolonial perspective, in a move similar to the profound shift in the language of sexuality, the self and cultural community, effected by feminists in the 1970s and the gay community of the 1980s".⁴ Postcolonial discourse in Australia is contested arena due to the complex power and fractured, historical relations between the colonial power, Britain, and settler and dispossessed Aboriginal cultures in Australia. Cross-cultural and multicultural discourses have developed as contemporary theoretical frameworks within which to negotiate and open up the elisions and collisions between the settler, migrant and indigenous cultures. As Charles Green has noted: "History, identity and place are joined under the sign of the postcolonial, but not, in fact, like happy families".⁵

Aboriginal art rapidly came to prominence from the beginning of the Western Desert movement in 1974 to participation in national and major international exhibitions during the 1980s and 1990s. Many urban, aboriginal artists who started their art practice in the 1980s have made conscious use of postmodern and postcolonial strategies in their work. *The Aboriginal Memorial*, 1988 two hundred burial poles representing each year of settler occupation of the land and acknowledging the unsung Aboriginal dead, is a particularly powerful and poignant postcolonial work, that both acknowledges dispossession and reinstates power, from an Aboriginal point of view. The influence of postcolonial discourse, with its interrogations of identity and place became part of the critical framework of a number of Australian sculptors and installation artists. For many

³ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, p.25

⁴ Homi Bhabha quoted in Robert Williams, *Art Theory: An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden MA, 2004, p.255

⁵ Charles Green, "The decay of postmodernism" in Jason Smith and Charles Green, *Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968 – 2002*, Ian Potter Centre, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2002, p.100

artists, both aboriginal and white Australians, the postcolonial retrieval of lost histories and subaltern voices, converged with ecological issues concerning the previous ignorance about and neglect of, Australia's unique and fragile ecosystems. From the late 1980s, engagement with artists, curators and critics from a number of countries in the neighbouring regions of South-east and North Asia, many countries of which had also been subjected to colonisation, combined with the increasing profile of artists from diasporic, migrant and refugee communities in Australia, ensured lively cross-cultural and postcolonial debates.

BRIEF HISTORY

International overview

The mid-1960s was a period of expansion in the field of sculpture and saw the advent of performance art and minimalism, an introduction of theatricality, as Michael Fried lamented, into a reductive, formalist world. This was followed in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s by the introduction of conceptual or post-object art, feminist art, land art, process art, post-minimalism and arte povera. The basis for this challenge was

“a deep disenchantment with the art that they (artists) had inherited – with its forms, its techniques, its attitudes, its surrounding institutions and its meaning”.⁶

The influence of post-structuralist theoretical discourses drawn from literature and linguistics, political ideology, cultural theory and psychoanalysis, was not available to the English-speaking Western world, specifically Britain and America, as much of it was written in French and German and not translated into English until the 1970s. The dissemination of these ideas was to have a profound effect on an artform such as sculpture, and coincided with the revolt from a narrow, formalist and late-modernist definition of what constituted sculpture promoted by powerful critics such as Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried in the America.

International art publications increasingly addressed the new theoretical discourse in contemporary art; *October*, a scholarly journal set up by a number of influential critics including Rosalind Krauss, was established in 1976. *Artforum* and *Arts International* as well as the European based, *Flash Art* also championed the expanding discourse in art.

⁶ Donald Brooks, *ARE Art, Representation, Education*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth, 1992, p.6

Both Mais and Hall were studying and working in New York during the late 1970s and early 1980s and would have been aware of these art theoretical debates and the artists whose works were being promoted as exemplars (many of them women).

Australian Context

In order to provide a context for sculptural developments within Australia from 1980 onwards, it is necessary to look at the important developments in Australia particularly in relation to the *Mildura Sculpture Triennials* and the powerful influence of the radical changes in the 1970s. Some of these changes include the ‘regendering’⁷ of sculpture through the Women’s Art Movement, John Kaldor’s art projects and the establishment of the *Biennale of Sydney*, all of which had such influential bearing on the ‘expanding field’ of sculpture. In the following section, a brief history of the background years of the *Mildura Sculpture Triennials* and the 1970s is provided to set the scene, so to speak, for an overview of the resultant developments within contemporary Australian sculpture during the 1980s, 1990s up to 2001. These developments will be discussed in some detail throughout the thesis.

The 1970s in Australia marked a period of the rejection of an essentially late modernist view of art, specifically of painting and sculpture, as an hermetically sealed activity based upon formalism, and the embrace of was an expanding field of activities and art practices.

Recent history and developments in sculpture in Australia are encompassed not just in terms of physical expression but also in terms of the theoretical underpinnings of the works. As Elwyn Lynn stated in his introductory note to the 7th *Mildura Sculpture Triennial* in 1978:

“In recent decades we have witnessed a revolt against the massively monumental, the volumetric, the consummately crafted sculpture that dictates its viewing points; sculpture has leapt off the pedestal to the floor, and back again, if only to the table; it is disposable, perishable, unsubstantial and so fragile that it defies preservation and collection....and it can be as enigmatic and puzzling as the question: what is sculpture?”⁸

⁷ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000, p.223

⁸ Elwyn Lynn, ‘Introductory Note’, 7th *Sculpture Triennial at Mildura Arts Centre*, Mildura Arts Centre, 1978, n.p.

The director of Mildura Art Gallery, Ernst van Hattum stated in the catalogue for the inaugural 1961 *Mildura Prize*:

“The choice of sculpture as the subject for promotion may not be an obvious one at first thought (sic). Yet, if we consider the importance of sculpture in most of the ancient civilisations and the past periods of our western culture against the virtual lack of good public sculpture in our cities, we must agree that no other form of art was more deserving of assistance.”⁹

What began with the establishment of the *Mildura Sculpture Award* in 1961, as an admission of sculpture as ‘the poor relation’ of the visual arts and a financially neglected one at that, evolved over a relatively short period of time into the *Mildura Sculpture Triennial*, with each successive Triennial exhibiting the most innovative, new art to be seen in Australia. The Triennials provided a valuable historic document of the changes and developments in, and pluralist interpretations of, sculpture in Australia through to the late 1978. The *Australian Sculpture Triennial* which ran from 1981 to 1993 replaced Mildura. Innovative sculpture in Australia had an important champion in Tom McCulloch, the director of five *Mildura Sculpture Triennials* from 1967 to 1978, director of the second *Biennale of Sydney* in 1976 and director of the first *Australian Sculpture Triennial* in 1981.

The late 1960s and throughout the 1970s was also a time of growing exposure to visits and exhibitions by major overseas artists, critics and curators; John Kaldor’s Art Projects included Christo’s, *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, Sydney*, 1969, regarded by many as one of the most important installations of its time because of its impact on the Australian art scene. It “ushered in the postmodern era in Australian art...offering a new model of artistic practice...the new shores of hybrid possibilities”.¹⁰ (Christo also contributed a large tarpaulin package to the *Mildura Sculpture Triennial* in 1970).¹¹ Kaldor funded visits by Gilbert and George (‘living sculptures’) and Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman. Harald Szeeman curated an exhibition of new Australian art and the Power Institute brought out Lucy Lippard, the leading American feminist art critic, to lecture and tour, thus bolstering the fledgling Women’s Art Movement with her critical,

⁹ Cited in Louise Martin-Chew, ‘Rebirth of Sculpture in Australia’, *Art and Australia* Vol. 40 No. 1 2002, pp.126-131, p.127

¹⁰ Julie Ewington, ‘In the Wild: Nature, Culture, Gender in Installation Art’, in Adam Geczy and Benjamin Genocchio (eds), *What is Installation? An anthology of writings on Australian installation art*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2001, p36

¹¹ Daniel Thomas, “Mildura, McCulloch and Performance”, *Artlink* Vol.13 No.2 1993, p.27

theoretical insights. Although in 1976, the 2nd *Biennale of Sydney* (curated by Tom McCulloch, the then Director of the Mildura Art Gallery and Sculpture Triennial), to its credit, positioned Australian sculptors and installation artists alongside their international peers, the representation of women artists was poor. This situation led to a concerted action by local artists, men and women, to lobby the Biennale Board and the next Director for a target of 50% representation by women artists in future Biennales. The Australian section of the 1979 3rd *Biennale of Sydney* reached this target for the first and only time.¹²

Although the formalist aesthetic of welded steel promoted by Ron Robertson Swann was the dominant mode of sculptural practice taught in art schools, Australian sculpture in the 1970s was beginning to be emancipated through the powerful leavening effects of conceptualism (labelled Post-object art by Donald Brook), feminism and the Women's Art Movement to embrace a variety of forms including environmental, post-object, performance, low technology, multi-media and community based sculptural practices. It was the beginning of the period when the practice of sculpture fled the pedestal and the plinth, denounced its traditional parameters of volume and mass and took up concerns such as space, time, movement; transient and ephemeral expressions "founded on alternate critical premises" to the modernist concerns of physicality and the formal values of the work.¹³ These new modes of sculptural practice were suited to the climate of intense political and theoretical enquiry. Nevertheless, much of the work possessed a quirky Australian humour, including some of the performance installations at Watters Gallery in the 1970s and the wonderfully irreverent ceramic sculptures by Margaret Dodd and others.

Nevertheless, the 1970s can also be characterised by a schizophrenic fissure, with welded steel being the most recognised sculptural form in mainstream art and institutions while the 'anything goes' of inter-media, post-object and feminist projects were relegated to the alternative exhibiting spaces, community workshops and experimental commercial galleries such as Watters Gallery in Sydney.¹⁴ This schizophrenic fissure also resulted in a significant de-skilling of sculptural technique in art schools; another contributing

¹² Barbara Hall, "Selected Chronology" in Catriona Moore (ed), *Dissonance: Feminism and the Arts 1970-90*, Allen and Unwin in association with Artspace, St Leonards, 1994, p.278

¹³ Brian Wallis (ed), *Art after Modernism; Rethinking Representation*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1984. p.xiii

¹⁴ Taken from the title, *Anything Goes: Art in Australia 1970-1980*, Paul Taylor (ed), *Art & Text*, Melbourne, 1984

factor to the collapse of rigid boundaries defining the medium and a loosening of the interpretation of what constituted sculptural form and expression. Mildura remained the one site where all forms were exhibited; this was sculpture's decade, 'painting... was pushed aside by sculpture'.¹⁵ The Triennials enabled sculptors to gain critical attention and recognition when there was little opportunity to do so in either the commercial galleries or institutional art scene.

Concomitant with the exploration of post-object art and the advent of new cultural theories into university and art school art history departments, was the necessary development of alternative art spaces. Such spaces included the Tin Sheds workshops at University of Sydney, Inhibodress Co-operative Gallery, Institute of Contemporary Art at Central Street and Watters Gallery in Sydney and Pincotheca in Melbourne, Ewing and Paton Galleries at the University of Melbourne and the later developments of government funded contemporary art spaces beginning with the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide in the mid 1970s.

The climate of political and social change in Australia in the 1970s fed and supported profound changes in the visual arts: the Whitlam government's introduction of universal, free university education provided a major democratising impetus and the establishment in 1973 of the Australia Council for the Arts whose patronage gave support to experimental art forms and marginalised groups. This impetus, alongside the increase in the numbers of women training as artists, studying art history and theory, becoming writers and critics, would be felt and seen in Australia's sculptural milieu from 1980 onwards.

1980s

The 1980s heralded a cool change of direction for sculptors. New forms of painting claimed the day, pushing sculpture and its various forms to the side. The formative *Mildura Sculpture Triennials* which were as much about artist exchanges as exhibitions were subsumed into the *Australian Sculpture Triennial* (1981 – 1993), a more institutional arrangement. Art as object returned but in a declamatory form full of

¹⁵ Daniel Thomas, "Art and Life: The actuality of Sculpture" in Paul Taylor (ed), *Anything Goes: Art in Australia 1970-1980*, Art & Text, Melbourne, 1984, p.98

parody and quotation. It was no longer politically charged but theoretically backed by publications such as *Art & Text* and exhibition catalogues with “a recognisable eighties’ discourse with clearly different aspirations, methods and moods”.¹⁶ Paul Taylor’s exhibition, *Popism*, opened at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1982 and announced the arrival of appropriation, and “sparked the first public debate in Australia of the theories of structuralism and semiotics imported from France”.¹⁷

The feminist magazine, *LIP*, established in 1976 by a collective, was under pressure in the early 1980s to take a more critical approach in its editorial coverage on the premise that as “long as feminist art lacked a theoretical base, its effects are short lived”.¹⁸

Funded art publications provided increased documentation of art practice and gave voice to the varied theoretical positions and practices across the visual arts spectrum: *Art Network* emerged in 1979 with *Art & Text* and *Artlink* appearing in 1981. Of these three, only *Artlink* is still in publication. Although regarded as conservative, *Art and Australia* continued publishing and *Art Monthly Australia* began life in the mid to late 1980s. These publications covered the full variety of opinions and positions within a very diverse field of activity.

Curator and writer, Graeme Sturgeon, regarded the 1970s as a period of the ‘dismantling of the very category of sculpture’, a time where sculpture had lost its way.¹⁹ He promoted, in his selection of work for the 2nd *Australian Sculpture Triennial* in 1984, a return to figuration with the attendant acknowledgement of the craft and skills of sculpture. The *Australian Perspecta*, a biennial exhibition of the latest in contemporary art in Australia that began in 1981, increasingly included sculptors and installation artists in its exhibitions. As Graeme Sturgeon observed of the 1980s: “the dominant attitude was one of freedom to do whatever seemed appropriate...no one style, medium or philosophical position was dominant”.²⁰

¹⁶ Charles Green, “Living in the Seventies” in *Off the wall/In the air, a seventies selection*, Monash University Gallery and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 1991, p.17

¹⁷ Roger Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation? An Anthology of Critical Writings in Australia in the '80s and '90s*, Institute of Modern Art and Power Institute of Fine Arts, Brisbane and Sydney, 1996, pp.16 and 18.

¹⁸ Memory Holloway, “Art Journals, Progeny of the 1970s” in Leon Paroissien (ed), *Australian Art Review*, Warner Associates, Rozelle, 1982, p.149

¹⁹ Graeme Sturgeon, *Contemporary Australian Sculpture*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1991, p. xiv

²⁰ Graeme Sturgeon: “Australia, Sculpture, after c. 1900”, *The Grove Dictionary of Art Online*, (Oxford University Press, Accessed [5 May 2004]) <<http://www.groveart.com.virtual.anu.edu.au>>

Although the new theoretical mood did not favour the 1970s pioneering spirit of feminism, it was feminism that provided the essential critique of the underlying structures and values in modernist art rhetoric and symbols. The 1980s saw the increasing feminisation of the visual arts, including within the now broad field of sculptural practice. Women artists were now represented by commercial galleries, included in curated exhibitions, their works were being purchased and acquired and they were gradually being included on the teaching staff in universities and arts schools. The significant expansion in the number of art schools and art departments in colleges and TAFES from the 1970s onwards and, the subsuming of a number of these schools within universities as a result of the Dawkins higher education reforms of 1988, offered increased job opportunities to artists, including women.

Although the economy by the mid 1980s was vibrant and the art market booming, most of the investment funds were poured into painting. There were corporate commissions, and some sculptors did reasonably well in this area, but it was still difficult to convince architects and specifiers to factor in public sculpture into their initial planning. Still, the burgeoning, funded contemporary art space network offered opportunities for more experimental work to be shown and many of the established commercial galleries began to represent sculptors and installation artists as part of their stable of artists. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, with the rebuilding or building extension programs to many state galleries completed, and the opening of the new Australian National Gallery, public galleries committed to acquisitions of sculpture, and some regional galleries developed sculpture gardens. Irving Sculpture Gallery opened in Sydney in the 1982 specifically to promote contemporary Australian sculpture.

For the first time in an international, contemporary art forum, aboriginal sculpture in the form of a sand painting installation from Lajamanu was installed as the centrepiece in the 1982, *6th Biennale of Sydney*. Jean-Hubert Martin, the commissioner for the French contingent at this Biennale, later attributed this event as the inspiration for his inclusion of a large sand painting by artists from Yuendumu in his exhibition, *Magiciens de la Terre* at the Georges Pompidou Centre, Paris, in 1989. The most outstanding, contemporary Aboriginal sculptural work to date in a public collection is *The Aboriginal Memorial* at the National Gallery of Australia. Conceived as a “war memorial” for the unsung hundreds of thousands of Aboriginal people who have died during two hundred

years of white settlement, the work was commissioned as the centrepiece for the 6th *Biennale of Sydney*, 1988 and later, presented to the National Gallery of Australia.²¹

The economic crash of 1987 did not begin to seriously affect the art market until mid 1989, but when it did, it hit the contemporary art market very hard and it took a long time to recover. The effect of this on sculptors and installation artists was dramatic: commissions dried up, galleries closed, other commercial galleries were not taking on new artists and public galleries' acquisitions budgets were slashed.

1990s

The early 1990s can be described by an acknowledgement of the prominence of women working in installation art and interestingly, given masculinist assumptions, working successfully and innovatively, with technology. This was certainly apparent in *Australian Perspectives* 1991 which focussed on sculpture and installation. Installation art, nationally and internationally, was embraced by museums and regarded in some quarters as 'the most significant structural change in the display of art in the past 200 years and thus assists in the current ubiquity of museums'.²² There were two *Australian Sculpture Triennials* 1990 and 1993; five *Australian Perspectives* from 1991-99; three *Asia-Pacific Triennials*, 1993, 1996 and 1999; the national project *Dissonance-Aspects of Feminism and Art* in 1991; the inclusion of sculpture in the annual *Moet and Chandon* prize from 1994-97. All of these exhibitions if not exclusively sculptural, had increasingly larger components of sculpture and installation art, particularly from women.

This period closely echoed aspects of the 1970s: there was a renewal of interest in issues-based work whether feminism, the environment, postcolonial themes or reconciliation. Collaboration featured in many installation artists' works; whether with artists from similar or divergently different background such as musicians, performers, dancers, film and video artists, writers, poets and scientists. Another aspect of this expansion and collaboration across fields other than art, has been the secondment of artists to natural history museums, zoos, botanical gardens and various departments of the CSIRO. Many

²¹ Djon Mundine, "World of Dreamings, The Aboriginal Memorial: We Have Survived", National Gallery of Australia, <<http://www.nga.gov.au/Dreaming/Index.cfm?Refrcnc=Ch2a>> accessed 24 November 2004.

²² Adam Gezcy and Benjamin Genocchio (eds), *What is Installation? An anthology of writings on Australian installation art*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2001, p.7

of the resultant works were ephemeral and uncollectible and exist post-exhibition, only in catalogues and other documentation.

By the mid 1990s, the economy had recovered and by 1997, a number of initiatives were in place that began to give an indication that sculpture was back on the cultural map. *Sculpture by the Sea*, now an annual event, had its modest start in 1997. Most of the metropolitan cities have benefited from increased interest and expenditure on public sculpture and in some instances government percent for art policies have ensured an ongoing commitment. Major commissioning projects included the Sydney Sculpture Walk, Olympic Park at Homebush Bay and in Melbourne, the Docklands Development Project.

In Victoria, *Contempora 5* launched in 1997, was the most generous prize for contemporary art; it was first awarded to Fiona Hall, for her installation *Give a dog a bone* and the following award in 1999 went to Ricky Swallow, an installation artist. There are many initiatives, commercial and public, that have become established events for promoting sculpture and installation works in recent years. Of particular note are two well endowed prizes of national importance, both of which commenced in 2000: the Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award based outside of Melbourne at Werribee Park and the National Sculpture Prize and Exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. The period since 1996 has witnessed a steady and gathering decline of funding in the public sector. The effects of this change on sources of patronage for the visual arts, and in particular on sculpture, is at this stage difficult to know. Nevertheless, it is clear from the evidence above, that the growth of awards and prizes for sculpture, may indicate the beginning of a new period for contemporary Australian sculpture.

SETTING THE SCENE FOR HILARIE MAIS AND FIONA HALL

Through the theoretical framework of postmodernism, feminism and postcolonialism, this chapter has set out to provide an overview of the developments within contemporary Australian sculpture between 1980 and 2001. In the following chapters, this framework is explored in detail through the monographic studies of two, mid-career women sculptors. whose mature works begin in the early 1980s.

CHAPTER TWO

Case Study: Hilarie Mais

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INTRODUCTION

It is Hilarie Mais's English artistic and intellectual background that provides the key to one possible reading her work, and I will argue that it is this background which contributes to her work's distinctive quality. The foundational matrix of her quintessentially British constructivist and painterly influences is overlaid with her concentrated immersion in the high-pressured environment of New York from the late 1970s to early 1980s. The impact of feminism, principally its concern for re-establishing the "relation of experience to discourse" that had been denied by the 1960s minimalist aesthetic of a "denial of subjectivity", was inspiring for Mais.¹ The resolution of these two powerful and radically different intellectual and artistic experiences, at a distance in Australia, has enabled Mais to develop a practice of criticality.

This chapter will present a monographic study of the work of Hilarie Mais, looking at her training and influences in Britain and New York, her exposure to a number of conflicting influences and, the subsequent resolution of those diverse influences within her work in Australia since 1981. Specific works will be analysed within postmodernist and feminist contexts, and this analysis will aim to show the integration of these concerns within her expanding vocabulary leading to the adoption of the grid as the recurrent format for investigating broader conceptual concerns in her practice.

The following paragraphs offer a profile of what was happening in the artworlds of London and New York in the 1970s and early 1980s, and of Sydney from the 1980s onwards, in order to investigate and speculate on where Mais has drawn her inspiration, from which she builds her own distinctive vocabulary of form and conceptual concerns. More detailed interpretations of Mais's influences and developments will be covered in the main body of the chapter, using these introductory profiles as a springboard for further exploration.

¹ Susan L. Stoops, "An Introduction", *More than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70s*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1996, p.9

Hilarie Mais's formative British background and later experience of being at the 'centre' in New York from 1977-1981, provide the framework, the forging if you will, of her artistic and intellectual environment, which she drew upon and continues to reinterpret, in Australia, where in 1981 she chose to live. An analysis of her particular British artistic and intellectual background is instructive as it is an area not explored in depth in previous publications and in many ways this aspect of the British tradition is an under-researched area of contemporary art practice. It is a specific aspect of this formative immersion in a particular artistic sensibility and language, one that differs significantly from the well publicised American developments in the 'expanded field' of sculpture and the tensions within painting, that continues to inform her work.²

Mais's art education followed the accepted trajectory in Britain for a bright student. Her foundation year was at Bradford School of Art, near her hometown of Leeds. She was then accepted into Winchester School of Art, a major regional art school, from which she graduated with First Class Honours in 1974 as a sculpture student. In 1975, she was accepted as a postgraduate student in the painting department of Slade School of Art, in London. It was certainly ironic that the work she submitted was regarded by the Slade as painting rather than sculpture. Even at this early point in her development, Mais's emblematic painted surfaces and frame-forms that slip and hover between wall and floor are already present. What is noticeable is that her work moves from describing a space, like a three-dimensional drawing, such as *Glade* 1975 (Plate 1) to more dynamic expressions of movement within space. The effortless fall from one line in the work *Kelly* 1976 to the sprung quality of *Arachne* 1978 (Plate 7) describes a confident engagement with time and space. In London in the 1970s, the milieu of artists whose works, although entirely different from each other, nevertheless hover between painting and sculpture and, the abstract constructivist concerns with building one's own vocabulary of forms through investigating the underlying structures in nature, was formative for the young sculptor. She was awarded the Boise Scholarship on completion of her postgraduate studies at the Slade and headed to New York.

Mais's involvement in the art scene in New York was initially through the New York Studio School where her future partner, William Wright, was the Associate Dean. Mais

² Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass, 1985, p. 276-290.

took up a fellowship between 1977-78. This enabled her to establish her own studio practice in a loft in SoHo. The art world in New York in the 1970s was reverberating with ideological, theoretical and stylistic upheavals. Formalist practices such as abstract expressionism, the hard-edge colour field and minimalist works of the 1960s, and critics such as Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried who supported them, were being challenged on a variety of fronts by feminist, process and conceptual art practices. This challenge was further reinforced in the later 1970s and early 1980s, by the emergence of postmodernist theoretical critiques. Two painters who exemplify the rebelliousness of the period are Philip Guston and Miriam Schapiro. These two high profile defectors, Guston from abstract expressionism to figurative painting and Schapiro from hard-edge abstraction to 'femmage's, were indicative of the volatility and excitement in the art scene at this time. This flux, particularly the stridency, clarity and visibility of the feminist artists would provide plenty of material for stimulation in Mais's final New York series, *Weapons* 1980 (Plate 2) and in her early works in Australia, specifically the *Past Imperfect* 1984 (Plate 3) series.

Following completion of the *Weapons* series, Mais left New York in 1981 for Australia with her partner William Wright, who had been offered the Directorship of the 1982 Biennale of Sydney. Mais arrived in Australia fully formed as an artist. It was the combination of the critical distance from the centres of her artistic influence and heritage and the major life changes experienced – migration, marriage, pregnancy and childbirth – that provided Mais with the chance to “rethink, refresh and reinvent”.³ This adjustment to the major physical and emotional changes in her life is reflected in her work of the early to mid-1980s: small, hand-held, wooden structures (in some cases made out of packing cases) that could be made quickly with a child crawling around the studio floor. Many of these talismanic, iconic subjectivities celebrate the maternal body as a container conveying its sense of otherness, as well as autobiographical references to her changed condition as a mother and migrant.

Since 1986, Mais has moved from such direct autobiographical work to the adoption of the grid as a meta-system. The grids evolved out of Celtic spirals and circles, returning to the conjunction of floor and wall whilst alluding in the ghosted shadows to presences,

³ Hilarie Mais, email to the author, 19 August, 2004

the play between form and its absence. The grid, that most Cartesian of vehicles, integrates her conceptual investigations of growth, form and recursive systems with her intuitive and perceptual considerations of shifts between the real and illusion, the object and its shadow, presences in the veiled and mirrored spaces that elude formal definition. The limitations of the rational grid allow for infinite explorations of the paradox of continuity and change and has offered Mais a matrix within which to reconcile ancient and contemporary concerns. Reconciliation of the varied and contradictory conceptual and visual stimuli which inform Mais's mature work is achieved not by a reductivist program, but rather by something more akin to a fugue: a meta-system of structural and conceptual complexity that incorporates many voices, many viewpoints. The critical distance of Australia from the 'centres' offered a proving ground where these multiple viewpoints, sometimes conflicting at other times, converging, can be seen and interpreted as a whole.

BRITISH SCULPTURE AND PAINTING IN THE 1970s

Hilarie Mais began her art training in England in the early 1970s, a bleak political and economic period in the UK, which set the scene for the eruption of the rebellious punk era, though this does not appear to have influenced her work until the early 1980s. She completed her bachelor degree of fine art at Winchester School of Art in 1974. In 1975, she was accepted as a post-graduate student into the painting department of the Slade School of Fine Art in London, "having been rejected as a sculpture student on the strength of works she considered to be sculpture rather than painting."⁴ This comment is worth noting as the slippage between painting and sculpture in Mais's work is emblematic of her oeuvre. This slippage characterises a current in English art that runs through the constructivist, abstract artists such as Victor Pasmore, Kenneth Martin and Howard Hodgkin.

The artistic milieu of the painting department of the Slade School of Art in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s favoured a painterly, constructivist approach. The convenor of postgraduate studies Malcolm Hughes, who exhibited with other British constructivists such as Anthony Hill, Gillian Wise and John Ernest, was one of Mais's teachers at the Slade. One of her painting lecturers was Tess Jaray, an established woman

⁴ Maggie Gilchrist, "Male monoliths, female symbols", *Art and Australia*, Vol. 23 No.2 Summer 1985, p.211

printmaker and painter who would later move into public art commissions integrating art and architecture; and Sir Lawrence Gowing, a noted British art historian, was Slade Professor. This would have provided a valuable counterpoint to the formalist welded steel sculpture in the style of Anthony Caro, that was being promoted in St Martin's Art School in London and which was still being championed by the American modernist critic, Clement Greenberg and the British sculptor and writer, William Tucker, in the 1970s.

Art practice in Britain was more diverse, less purist than in New York; certainly there were various debates in Britain that supported different streams of practice. British art practice from the 1950s onwards did not exclusively follow the narrow, linear, historicist trajectory of Clement Greenberg's modernism, nor the specific oppositional responses to this form of modernism such as the New York version of minimalism and pop art. British Pop started in the early 1950s by Richard Hamilton and others was more ironic and less polished than the later eponymous, and better-known, American version. Various writings by artists on both sides of the Atlantic during the 1960s and 1970s point to distinctly different approaches to the nature and function of art and expressed not a little distain for an opposing viewpoint.

Stephan Bann, reviewing the Kenneth Martin retrospective at the Tate Gallery in 1975, argued that "the separation of painting and sculpture into specific practices, each with its own exclusive formal and spatial conditions, has the force of dogma ... in the American criticism which follows Greenberg".⁵ Although Donald Judd, the minimalist, clashed with the critics and champions of American modernism, Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, nevertheless his comments within his essay "Specific Objects" highlight the concerns raised by Bann above. More generally, Judd's comments are indicative of the irreconcilable differences between the American and English (and possibly European) positions on painting and sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s. Judd declared the end of painting and sculpture; the new medium was three dimensional work. As he stated in "Specific Objects":

"Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problems of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around the marks and colours – which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art... Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface."⁶

⁵ Stephen Bann, "Kenneth Martin Retrospective", *Studio International*, July-August, 1975, p.81

⁶ Donald Judd, "Specific Objects" in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900 – 1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1992, p.813

Patrick Heron takes up the British cause in his Power Institute lecture of 1973, when he says “ It fell to us British to begin the trek back into pictorial complexity and away from that arid ‘openness’ which, in two generations of Americans...has become at last an academic emptiness”.⁷

As a young art student in the 1970s, Mais was aware of the sculptor Anthony Caro’s influence in the debate that freed sculpture from the pedestal, moving it to a more architectural engagement with its environment. This coincided with the revival of interest in constructivism, echoing Tatlin’s call for a constructivism that combined painting, sculpture and architecture and supported the British constructivists use of shallow relief, “a hybrid form lying between painting and sculpture...constituted by a material syntax”.⁸ Malcolm Hughes, a constructivist who taught at the Slade School of Art when Mais was studying painting, was involved in an Arts Council of Great Britain touring exhibition of works by twelve British constructivist artists in 1972-73, entitled *Systems*. Hughes wrote an article for *Studio International*, based on a discussion with the participating artists, in which he noted that the objectives of the exhibition were to “examine...the idea of ‘order with endless variety’.”⁹ He further stated that the aim of the artists in the exhibition was the practice of “a non-utopian art rejecting fixed absolutes, accepting non-static concepts of order, paradox and change....a non-hierarchical art.”¹⁰ These objectives were antithetical to the American modernist and minimalist views on the nature and function of painting and sculpture.

Texts that were particularly instructive for the post-war British constructivist artists included Charles Biederman’s *Art as the Evolution of Visual Knowledge* published in 1948 and his later, *Letters on the New Art*, 1951.¹¹ Influential though Biederman’s hypotheses were, British constructivists did not necessarily subscribe completely to his views. Other

⁷ Patrick Heron, “The Shape of Colour”, *Studio International* Vol.187 No.963 February 1974,p.71. The article was a reprint of the text for the 5th Power Lecture, given at the Power Institute of Fine Arts, University of Sydney, 22 June 1973.

⁸ Stephen Bann, “The centrality of Charles Biederman”, *Studio International* Vol.178 No.914 September 1969, p.72

⁹ Malcolm Hughes, “Notes on the context of ‘Systems’”, *Studio International* Vol.183 No. 944, May 1972, p.200

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Sandy Nairne and Nicholas Serota, *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1980, p.156. Both Charles Biederman’s books were self-published under the imprint, Red Wing.

valuable sources included D'Arcy Thompson, *On Growth and Form*, T.A. Cook, *The Curves of Life*, Mathilda Ghyka, *The Geometry of Art and Life* and Jay Hambidge's *Dynamic Symmetry*.¹² These would have been recommended reading for any student interested in British abstract constructivism's conceptual rationales.

Other valuable sources of art theory, information and discussion included Jack Burnham's *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, published in New York in 1968; Camilla Gray's, *The Great Russian Experiment in Art: 1863-1922*, published in New York, 1962; George Rickey's *Constructivism: Origins and Evolution*, published in London in 1968 and William Tucker's, *The Language of Sculpture*, published in London in 1974; and specialist publications including the monthly art magazine, *Studio International*.¹³ Mais was reading theorists such as Roland Barthes and Gaston Bachelard, the colour theory of Goethe as well as texts on the scientific theories and symbolism of colour, notably by Chevreul, Rood, Blanc and Itten.¹⁴ Other areas of interest for Mais included the British vernacular in architecture and the arts and craft movement promoted by William Morris.¹⁵

Published in London, the magazine *Studio International* was indicative of the currency of ideas and artistic developments circulating throughout Britain, Europe and America during the late 1960s to mid 1970s. The range of articles and concerns, including its regular 'new technology' features, were part of Mais's immersion in a particular, British version of modernism and its imminent successors. The various magazine numbers presented a broad view of art practices in the Western art-world. During the 1960s and

¹² *ibid.* D'Arcy Thompson, *On Growth and Form*, 2nd edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1952; T. A. Cook, *The Curves of Life: being an account of the spiral formations and their application to growth in nature, to science and to art*, Constable & Co., London, 1914. T. A. Cook had previously published *Spirals in nature and art*, J. Murray, London, 1903; Mathilda Ghyka, *The Geometry of Art and Life*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1946; Jay Hambidge, *Dynamic Symmetry in composition as used by the artists*, self-published, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1923.

¹³ Jack Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, 4th printing 1975, George Braziller, New York, 1968; Camilla Gray, *The Great Russian Experiment in Art: 1863-1922*, Abrahms, New York, 1962; George Rickey, *Constructivism: Origins and Evolution*, George Braziller, New York, 1967; William Tucker, *The Language of Sculpture*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1974. This was first published in 1972 in a series called *New aspects of art*. The American edition was entitled, *Early Modern Sculpture*.

¹⁴ Anne Loxley, *Hilarie Mais*, Craftsman House, East Roseville, 1995, p.8 and Hilarie Mais, email to author, 31 August, 2004

¹⁵ Hilarie Mais, email to author on 19th and 31st August, 2004

early 1970s, in both Europe and America, there was a revival of interest in earlier forms of modernism. This was evident in the many articles on and exhibition reviews of Dadaism and constructivism in all its forms from Russian pre- and post-Revolution, to Bauhaus, De Stijl, Charles Biederman's structurism and British post-World War Two abstract constructivists such as Kenneth and Mary Martin, Victor Pasmore and Anthony Hill.

The language and concerns expressed by various British constructivists echo many of the concerns, both formal and intuitive, that Mais has continued to explore in her own work: daring to hand paint steel and wooden constructions as though they were a canvas, building up ground and the applications of transparent paint glazes to create surface illusion on a structure, all fly in the face of the rigid position taken by Anthony Caro, Phillip King, William Tucker and their followers. Mais's use of colour indicates a detailed understanding of visual, spatial construction which can be attributed to the influence of painters such as Howard Hodgkin and Patrick Heron, rather than to the American colour field painters and their British counterparts; those artists such as Bernard and Harold Cohen, John Hoyland, Robin Denny in association with the curator, Lawrence Alloway, who mounted the exhibition, *Situation*, in 1960 at the Royal Society of British Artists in London.

Howard Hodgkin was a visiting artist at both the Slade and Chelsea Art Schools in London between 1976 and 1977, when Mais was studying painting at the Slade. Patrick Heron, both a critic and artist, had been commissioned to deliver the Power Institute Lecture at the University of Sydney in 1973, in which he discussed the "grammar of painting" as the essential and intuitive relationship between colour and space.¹⁶ The transcript of the lecture was reprinted in *Studio International* in 1974.

By the early 1970s, Hodgkin had begun to use wooden forms to paint on instead of canvas. He also incorporated the frames and wooden supports in his painting, playing with shallow depth and was interested in the resistant quality of wood, as well as its natural grain and colour which he used as part of the painted texture in his works. His use of shallow relief from incorporating the frames and wooden supports into his painting and building up thickly layered and textured paint on the surface lent a quality of the object to this series of works. These objects or 'memorials' (as Hodgkin referred to

¹⁶ Heron, *Op. Cit.*, p.68

them) are autobiographical, intimate studies of fleeting moments, in their scale, intensity and saturation of colour. The evidence of the craftsman's handiwork is retained in the seams and old screw holes in the recycled wood of the door frames, drawing boards and other everyday wooden structures that have been recruited. The tension created between an intense evocation of memories and the fugitive sensations embedded in these compact, tactile structures inspires connections with Mais's early 1980s wood works, her autobiographical icons with their hand-wrought, even clumsy, build up of the surface with gaudy paint. Hodgkin had said: "I wanted to use paint as a substance".¹⁷ This finds resonance in Mais's use of colour as a "built sensation"; she builds up transparent glazes "so that the colour is holding light within itself."¹⁸ Rather than 'memorials' of shared intimate moments, Mais's works are more critical expressions of change and cycles, in her case, the alienated experience of a migrant, exploring the theme of 'us' and 'them'. Later the differentiating female cycles of pregnancy, birth and child rearing "caused her to fully understand that being female...signified separate functions quite different to the male."¹⁹

Mais's emerging syntax was a combination of peculiarly British painterly concerns with an exploration of how colour creates and manipulates space and a constructivist interest in a non-mimetic, representation of the processes involved in building natural forms. Mais acknowledges her interest in the later works of Kenneth Martin, his *Chance and Order* series of drawings, paintings and prints and may have seen, or been aware of, his major retrospective exhibition at The Tate Gallery in London in 1975. Painterly texture, evidence of the artist's hand was also a trait of Kenneth Martin's painting series and his 'enlivened surfaces' can be seen to inform Mais's handling of surface and the painting of her constructions.²⁰ She met Martin in New York in 1979, around the time of his retrospective exhibition at the Yale Centre for British Art. Mais acknowledges the influence of his *Chance and Order* drawings on her large, free-standing works, *Fence* and *Pandora II*, completed in New York in 1979.

¹⁷ Timothy Hyman, "Howard Hodgkin: Making a riddle out of the solution" in *Howard Hodgkin Small Paintings 1975 – 1989*, British Council, London, 1990, p.10

¹⁸ Hilarie Mais, taped interview with the author, 20 May 2004

¹⁹ Nick Waterlow, "Introduction", *Hilarie Mais 1 - 25 October 1997*, Sherman Galleries Sydney, 1997, unpaginated

²⁰ Stephen Bann: "Kenneth Martin", *The Grove Dictionary of Art Online*, (Oxford University Press, Accessed 30 August 2004), <<http://www.groveart.com.virtual.anu.edu.au>>

This syntax would be challenged and extended during her time in New York. Mais's exposure to the minimalist works of Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Carl Andre and Sol Le Witt was counter-balanced by seeing the works of established female artists such as Miriam Schapiro, Agnes Martin, Eva Hesse and Linda Benglis as well as the highly articulate, feminist art milieu of New York. This will be explored more fully in this chapter when investigating Mais's work in a feminist context.

THE NEW YORK PERIOD 1977-1981

William Wright had been Head of Painting at the Winchester School of Art (where Mais had studied sculpture as an undergraduate student) from 1970 until he took up the position of Associate Dean, New York Studio School in 1976. While Mais was still completing her postgraduate painting diploma at the Slade School in London, Wright offered her a two-month residency at the Sculpture Studios of the New York Studio School in 1976, as part of a newly established program for attracting international post-graduate level students to the school. Mais was an outstanding student, having graduated from Winchester School of Art with first class honours, and on completion of her Slade Higher Diploma she was awarded the Boise Scholarship. In 1977, she was offered a New York Studio School fellowship and returned to New York to work in the sculpture studios.

Mais spent more than five years in New York between 1977 and 1981. She secured representation at the Cunningham Ward Gallery, a contemporary commercial gallery in New York. She would have been surrounded by and participated in theoretical discussion and debate amongst artists and critics, especially through the auspices of the New York Studio School. This was a critically vibrant period in American contemporary art. During the 1970s, feminism had spread into the art-world and was further advanced, more strident and vocal than in Britain. Translations of important French theorists into English and the interpretation by a new generation of critics, academics and artists of these texts (grouped under the umbrella term of postmodernism), were beginning to be disseminated.

In 1976, the new critical theory journal, *October*, was launched in New York under the direction of Rosalind Krauss and in 1977, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, also by Krauss, was published. This text and Krauss's later publication, *The Originality of the Avant-*

Garde and other Modernists Myths (1981), are both noted by Mais as texts which influenced her practice. Krauss's 1979 article, "Eva Hesse: Contingent", makes observations on Hesse's work that have clear parallels with Mais's process.²¹ Hesse's exploration of "the boundary that lies *between* the institutions of painting and sculpture" and Krauss's comment that "the gravitational field" between these two institutions "is always experienced as shifting" are instructive in the loosening up of Mais's vocabulary in New York and perhaps hint at the shifts that will continue in her work.²² Hesse was one of a number of women abstract artists working in the late 1960s and 1970s, whose work challenged and subverted the male-dominated and exclusive domain of minimalism, proving "that the language of abstraction can articulate multiple subjective discourses".²³

Minimalism rejected duality, ambiguity and allusion as emphasised by Robert Morris in his quote: "The sensuous object, resplendent with compressed internal relations, has had to be rejected".²⁴ Although Barnett Newman's widow gave Mais his paints to work with, there is little in Mais's work that suggests an interest in Newman's claim that "some of us, free from the weight of European culture, are finding the answer... We are freeing ourselves from the impediments of memory, association, nostalgia, legend, myth ... that have been the devices of Western European painting."²⁵ Mais was certainly informed by the minimalists' works but her own work in no way indicates acceptance of this position.

Mais's engagement with the highly competitive, intellectual and artistic arena of New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s would have been both challenging and invigorating for a young British artist. She would have felt the reverberations of the 'challenges from within' to the high-modernist and minimalist discourses provided by Philip Guston and Miriam Schapiro, among others. A veritable rebellion against such

²¹ Eva Hesse, *Contingent*, 1969 was acquired by the then Australian National Gallery in 1973

²² Rosalind Krauss, *Bachelors*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass, 1999, p.100

²³ Stoops, *Op. Cit.*, p.7

²⁴ Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture 1 – 3", *Art in Theory 1900 – 1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1992, p.819

²⁵ Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *A World History of Art*, 5th edition, Laurence King Publishing, London, 1999, p.840

absolutist notions was being mounted. Both artists defected; Guston from abstract expressionism and Schapiro from hard-edge, geometric painting. In 1970, Guston shocked the art world with his return to figurative painting, seen as a lurid, highly critical, politically charged and 'impure' body of work. His work was a profound acknowledgement of a European tradition that was anathema to American formalism.

Miriam Schapiro, who in her work, *Ox* 1968 (Plate 5) was looking to incorporate feminist concerns into her hard-edge works, finally took up the challenge in the 1970s, abandoning geometric abstraction for 'femmagés': shaped canvases incorporating collages of crafted materials with strong feminine associations such as lace, handkerchiefs and fabric with decorative, acrylic paint surfaces. This celebration of women's handiwork and the craft of making combined with Mais's interests in constructivism and the British arts and craft movement, became manifest in the small, hand-held works she created in Australia after the birth of her first child.

Mais's immersion in this intense cultural milieu resulted in the gradual abandoning of the literal frame as a structural support while she was in New York; loosening the relationship with the wall in works such as *Untitled* 1977 and *Arachne* 1978 (which refer to Vladimir Tatlin's, *Corner Relief*, where the wall is the frame) to the large, free-standing *Pandora II* and *Fence* (Plates 6 and 8) works both completed in 1979. These two works were based closely on a drawing from Kenneth Martin's *Chance and Order*, 1974 series (Plate 4). The grid format in these free standing works is used as a support framework only; perhaps a chrysalis, which will fully emerge in its own right in 1986 in the transition work, *Doors, Thoughts: The Maze* incorporating a group of highly-coloured icons, floating above a wooden, maze-like grid.

William Wright, Mais's partner, accepted the position of Dean of the State University of New York at Purchase in 1979. This transfer offered an opportunity to Mais that was to stimulate a major turning point in her work. Having produced the large work, *Fence*, in her small loft in New York, Mais was offered the use of Alexander Calder's hangar-like studio to work in. The *Weapons* series, produced there, was the antithesis of the space and of her previous steel works: compact, dense, confrontational, glistening with black humour like the tung oil used to service these macabre hand-to-hand tools/weapons. This series was her last work in New York and represented an important transition in her process.

Mais moved from restrained and elegant geometric constructions which engage the viewer in an architectural space to autobiographical, talismanic works, hung on the wall at eye level, in ironic dialogue with the viewer. This is not a return to the wall as framing device, rather it is more like a declamatory billboard of feminist graffiti. Her constructivist influences are still evident in these works: the articulation of the material surface using an angle grinder and rubbing down with tung oil to give the patina of a well-used tool, highlight the presence of the artist's hand work. Nevertheless, for Mais, it is firstly the result of a collision between diametrically opposed forms of modernism; British (and earlier European) constructivism versus American formalism of the 1950s and 1960s, and the subsequent rebellion in America during the 1970s against the hegemony of formalism. Secondly, her exposure to the subversive power of women artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Miriam Schapiro, Eva Hesse and Linda Benglis begins to show in her final New York series, *Weapons* 1980. As Mais observed of this period, "women were claiming the vocabulary of minimalism for their own stories."²⁶

THE MOVE TO AUSTRALIA

"Space, then, for the woman artist will reflect where she is at - in her life, in her dreams", Miriam Schapiro, 1975.²⁷

The grid, which has become her signature motif, did not emerge from its chrysalis in the earlier steel works until 1986, although the Celtic spirals she used in her work from the early to mid 1980s allude to this in the way that the 'bosses' at the junctions of the roof structures in Romanesque cathedrals reveal and protect the hidden, underlying grid structure of the roof beams. The iconic bosses of Mais's first five years in Australia address difference, both sexual and cultural, in such works as *Seed* 1983, a celebration of female fecundity where as *Alter* and *Nos* 1984 (literally 'other' and 'we'), reference alienation (a common feeling for migrants) in their 'alienness' to each other.

On a visit to London, Mais saw the exhibition, *English Romanesque Art: 1066 to 1200*, at the Hayward Gallery in July 1984. It reminded her of her Celtic, visual heritage, particularly the cathedral at York Minster. In effect, Mais is mining her past, drawing on the British Romanesque visual traditions: bosses, Celtic spirals and cathedral roof grid

²⁶ Hilarie Mais, email to the author, 19 August, 2004

²⁷ Thalia Gouma-Peterson, *Miriam Schapiro: shaping the fragments of art and life*, Harry N Abrams in association with the Polk Museum, New York, 1999, p.21

formations. Her immediate feeling of alienation in Australia is mediated through pregnancy and childbirth, which prompt her to explore cycles of continuity and lineage. The works produced between 1981 and 1986 are intensely autobiographical, as well as being modest and compact in scale. These works also represent a change in her working material from steel to wood, a material that is more readily available and easier to manipulate. It was a pragmatic response to her situation; initially using the packing cases as source material and then, as a medium that is quick to work with, especially when there are children crawling under foot in the studio.

In Australia, geographically distant from the major art centres of the Western world, Mais's incorporation of the 'presence of the past' in her work, whether specific modernist practices or ancient Celtic symbolism began as a process of critical reflection. Her works offer an ironic dialogue: the tension between the restrained, flowing, constructivist wall and floor works of the 1970s and the sometimes aggressive, often cheeky and gaudy 'iconic sensibilities' including the Celtic spirals of the early to mid-1980s is resolved in the grid, which first appeared in 1986 and has continued as the singular format for her work since.²⁸ The resolutions within the grid format of many layers of complex, shifting, concerns whether formal, conceptual or instinctual, represents Mais's work in its maturity.

HILARIE MAIS'S WORK WITHIN THE POSTMODERNIST CONTEXT

Symptomatic of the zeitgeist of the late 1960s to early 1970s, leading French post-structuralists Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, independently and within a year of each other, penned important essays questioning the locus of meaning in a text (artwork). In his 1968 essay, "The Death of the Author", Roland Barthes stated, "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety or writings, none of them original, blend and clash."²⁹ This 'death' implied a birth. In the case of art, it was the birth of the viewer and the multiplying meanings dependent of the viewer's context (their 'point-of-view'). The relevance to art practice is particularly

²⁸ Linda Hutcheon, "Theorising the Postmodern towards a poetics", Charles Jencks (ed), *The post-modern reader*, St Martins Press, New York, 1992, p.77

²⁹ Robert Williams, *Art Theory: An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p.241

evident in Michel Foucault's essay "What is an author?", published in 1969 in which he states the indeterminate position of meaning as, "one which will no longer be the author, but ... will have to be determined or, perhaps, experienced."³⁰

These dissertations were not translated into English until later in the 1970s, hence the delay in the dissemination of these ideas in the English-speaking academies and art fraternities. Nevertheless, much of the work done by minimalist and conceptual artists was challenging the modernist conceits of the artist as genius and the autonomy of the artwork within strict formalist readings according to the clearly distinct mediums of painting and sculpture.

In relation to Mais's practice, the placement of the works within the viewer's space: directly on the floor, hanging from the ceiling, leaning against the wall and the use of reflective surfaces such as mirrors and glass, offer multiple interpretations without declaring an authoritative, singular position by the artist. Mais's constructivist approach to scale, the accumulation of units based on the indexical relationship of human hand and body span enunciate, "the decentering of modern sculpture, in which the spectator's body is the sculpture's subject."³¹

A further development in Mais's practice was her incorporation of the grid as the formal device for her systems investigations into non-mimetic explorations of natural, mathematical systems using the repetitive matrix of the grid to reveal endless diversity in form. This process is illustrative of the post-structuralist philosopher Gilles Deleuze's proposition in *Difference and Repetition* that, "difference is the basic condition of being, and repetition is an effect of its 'productive power'". To add further emphasis, he goes on to state that, "art does not imitate, above all it repeats" thus aligning art with the 'productive power' of being and its expression in difference.³²

The legitimacy of repetition and copies has been a thread through the theoretical discourse of the twentieth century, first raised by Walter Benjamin in his paper, "The

³⁰ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" as quoted in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1992, p.928

³¹ Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1990, p.247 . This is a footnote which references Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, p.279

³² Williams, *Op. Cit.*, p.244

Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” published in German in 1936. This challenge to the modernist concept of the original is also raised by the Structuralist, Charles Biederman, whose writings inspired many of the British constructivists in the early 1950s. As early as 1948, in his publication *Art as the Evolution of Visual Knowledge*, he stated: ”that the traditional notion of ‘original’ art works would be superseded... that the work of art had no sacred apartness ... (and) that art could be mass-produced, rather than merely ‘reproduced’, giving ‘originals’ in all cases.”³³

The period, begun in the mid 1960s, of intense questioning of the underpinnings of the modernist project, most specifically of the Greenbergian formalist epistle, gathered momentum in the 1970s as many of the essential French and German interdisciplinary theoretical texts were translated into English and published in England and America. These dissertations, which provoked extensive critical debate, combined with the challenges posed by the expansion of multi-disciplinary art practices, feminism and political activism in art the 1970s, ensured an opening out and up of the whole art discourse.

The works that I will address in considering post-modernist influences in Hilarie Mais’s oeuvre - notably the inference of the birth of the viewer within Barthes’s and Foucault’s declarations of the ‘Death of the author’ or ‘author-function’ - are the New York works, *Pandora II* and *Fence*, both completed in 1979 and *Divide: Variations* 2004. I will also investigate the Deleuzian proposition of repetition and difference in *Bearing Effigy* 1996 and *Pulse Line* 2001.

***Pandora II*, 1979 and *Fence*, 1979 (Plates 6 and 8)**

Passage and transition are important visual and intellectual threads in Mais’s work. This shifting and uncertainty are evident in this penultimate steel series, of which one work, *Pandora II*, is now in the Parliament House Collection, in Canberra. These are the only free-standing steel works in her entire output. All works prior to and since these have used the wall, floor or ceiling as framing supports to engage the viewer in time and space. *Pandora II* and *Fence* are adult human scale, the individual rods are handspan width and its design is loosely modelled on a Kenneth Martin *Chance and Order* drawing. These works clearly acknowledge their British and European modernist lineage and are quite contrary to Clement Greenberg’s purist specifications of what

³³ Stephen Bann, “The centrality of Charles Biederman”, *Studio International*, Vol.178 No.914, September 1969, p.74

constituted modern, sculptural form. The gouged steel patina can be clearly read as a kind of drawing and erasure; the surface is re-complicated according to the way light and shadows fall, adding a further virtual dimension.

Nevertheless, as early examples of Foucault's 'author-function' shifting into the viewer's experience in Barthes 'multi dimensional space', *Pandora II* and *Fence* exemplify this ambiguity. These two works do not dictate their viewpoint; interpretation depends entirely on the viewer's position, both physically with regard to light, shadow, scale and detail as well as intellectually and emotionally, in relation to the work. These are neither silent, inert objects nor declarative works. They are firmly placed within the viewer's space inviting a variety of interpretations, "...with the experience of a moment-to-moment passage through space and time."³⁴

It was after the move to Australia, to the periphery of 'centres' like New York or London, that her distinctive personal style matured. Drawing on her British visual and cultural heritage and the constructivist interest in systemic patterns of growth and form, Mais moved from icons to spirals to the grid, the ultimate modernist symbol of repetition, offering a critique of the 'centres' dominance and mainstream art. As Ian Burn states:

"...amalgamations of received styles can serve to obscure, even deliberately distance, a dependence on sources...artists have used this as a way of mediating influence...the strategies of overlapping, of slippages and gaps can be exploited for different ends and contradictions played off against each other."³⁵

Mais's work in Australia evades any particular definition of style; it is a hybrid and could thus be seen to confirm Lyotard's assertion, "Postmodern knowledge...refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable".³⁶

The works discussed below are from 1996 to 2004 and represent some of her most sophisticated explorations.

³⁴ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1977, p.282

³⁵ Ian Burn, "Re-Appropriation of Influence", *Dialogue; Writings in Art History*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1991, p.212

³⁶ Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Introduction" to *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*, Paris, 1979, as quoted in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1992, p.1000

Divide: Variations, 2004 (Plate 9)

Foucault's claim that the text (artwork) "will have to be determined or, perhaps, experienced" meshes with Barthes's notion of a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" to allow for a postmodernist reading of Mais's most recent two panelled floor work. Barthes's reference to 'a variety of writings' can be equated with Mais's techniques of articulation: painting, systems of construction, the use of reflective surfaces and horizontal placement and the viewer's interaction with the work, over time and in the same physical space. This particular work plays on a number of levels. It is a two-panelled, mirror reversal work, though unlike the earlier 'duality' series, it does not challenge the illusion of a two-dimensional stretched canvas with an actual physical grid. Nevertheless, it does explore perceptions of difference in the mirror reversals of the two grids (one black, one white). Chance, flaws and the use of mirrors expand the sense of 'the multi-dimensional space', increasing the experience of dislocation and distortion for the viewer. The reference to flaws comes from Agnes Martin, a minimalist painter with a deep interest in spirituality, who was an inspiration for Mais. It is based on the theory of divine perfection in which the man-made must include flaws. The subtle inclusion of intentional flaws plays on perceptions of difference and similarity and the critical modes we use to distinguish these.

The use of reflective surfaces, mirrors and glass in this work, are visual puns on the concept of representation. Reflections which deflect attention from the actual work while capturing the "viewer's presence as a witness", reinforcing the active role of the viewer in the work, produce a distorted depth of field and provide a disjointed experience of the work.³⁷ The distortion is further heightened by the fact the work rests on the floor and is sufficiently large to prevent a whole view. It is only possible to get a partial sense of the work and its compartments from each vantage point. This physical reality amplifies the variety of experiences and interpretations of this 'multi-dimensional space' experienced by viewers while also bringing the viewer closer to the process of investigation into the ambiguous, shifting surface of the work.

Mais's work is intuitive. Her systemic approach is "not the imposition of a 'system' so much as an evolutionary coming to understand the 'system within', the logic of interconnectedness within an idea, a given work or series of works".³⁸ The grids, particularly the more complex works since the mid 1990s, emulate recursive systems, a

³⁷ Burn, *Op. Cit.*, p.191

³⁸ Hilarie Mais, email to the author, 30 August 2004

property of organic structures including languages, making them the very opposite of inert objects. Recursive systems have many different layers of complexity, yet consist of fundamental units. They are essentially repetitive, containing both the instruction and code for replication. The possibility of paradox, or irony, is a characteristic of such systems that self-modify according to circumstances. A characteristic of recursive systems, one that is certainly evident in Mais's later works, is that what is perceived differs according to which level is being examined. The inherent shifting quality of her grids emulates recursive functions in visual language: the shimmer of the painted surface, the shifting shadows in the narrow depths of the grid structure and the fragmented and dissociative reflections of mirrors and glass surfaces. This ambiguity is indicative of highly complex structures and is played out even further in the 'duality' series, each work consisting of a painted, stretched canvas and a replicated grid.

Gilles Deleuze's proposition in *Difference and Repetition* that, "difference is the basic condition of being, and repetition is an effect of its 'productive power'" may be interpreted with regard to the principle of recursive systems in Mais's work.³⁹ Another important paradox in Mais's work with the grid is that contrary to the 'silence' claimed by Krauss for the grid, Mais's grids activate presences and articulate 'a more abstract evocation'.⁴⁰ These are not silent, impervious, inert devices. In the repetition of the constructive processes they emerge as evocations of difference, however slight, shifting and ambiguous.

Repetition and difference are central to Mais's working process (as they are to any sophisticated language system). The grid is synonymous with repetition and in Mais's work, it is based on reflexive, recursive systems which both transmit encoded information and the instructions for replication. Mais's limited vocabulary of materials and process is codified, with clear rules of process that paradoxically, contain instructions for growth and change. This limited repertoire makes unlimited and unpredictable growth and change both possible and inevitable.

³⁹ Williams, *Op. Cit.*, p.244

⁴⁰ Anne Loxley, *Hilarie Mais*, An Art and Australia Book, Roseville East, 1995, p.17

Bearing Effigy, 1994 (Plate 10)

This work is the first diptych in the 'duality' series where a painted, stretched canvas mirrors a leaning, constructed wooden grid.⁴¹ The limited repertoire in this work establishes repetition as the principle process of constructing the work: a palette of matte and gloss black, the same shape and depth of the grid and canvas stretcher, the handspan width of the grid mapping on both surfaces and the uniform width of wooden beams in the grid. The shallow depth of the canvas stretcher is mirrored by the shallow depth of the wooden grid structure; one an illusionary representation of a structure, the other an actual physical presence. Yet there are several dualities and contradictions at play; the infinite and impenetrable spatial surface of the painted canvas, where the black gloss painted grid pattern resists the matte ground, creating a tension across the painting, pulling the centre forward in a convex movement. This is counter-pointed in the grid structure where the major pattern outline is highlighted in gloss paint against the matte ground which is now a matrix of smaller grid patterns. This porosity creates an inversion both perceptually and actually: the shadowing creates a density at the centre, which recedes into the space between the grid and the wall. The effect creates an overwhelming sense of a physical presence behind the gridded screen, which paradoxically is only a shadow; it is also a reversal of the painting as an illusionistic representation of the actual physical presence of the wooden grid construction.

The British constructivist principle, enunciated by Victor Pasmore in the 1950s and reworked by Kenneth Martin in his *Chance and Order* series in the 1970s, of the "differences in similarities" and the "similarities in differences" is evident in the duality series of works.⁴² Difference emerges as a result of the paradox of repetition of 'syntactic procedures' combined with intuition: the use of a limited repertoire of materials and basic units, modelled on reflexive, mathematical systems of growth and change that exist in nature, allows uncharted and minute adaptations to emerge in the process of construction.⁴³ There is no single, predetermined path and an infinite number of choices to be made in the process. The shifting ambiguity of surface and structure, porosity and opacity, play out the creative tension between the physical processes of

⁴¹ Nick Waterlow, 'Introduction', *Hilarie Mai 1 – 25 October 1997*, Sherman Galleries, Sydney, 1997, unpaginated

⁴² Lawrence Alloway, *Nine Abstract Artists: Their work and theory*, Alec Tiranti Ltd, London, 1954, p.10

⁴³ Malcolm Hughes, "Notes of the context of 'Systems' ", *Studio International* Vol.183 No.944, May 1972, p.200

handling, joining and painting, and the intuitive and conceptual decision-making. The completed work is a powerful evocation of perceptual shifts between the “similarity in differences” and the “differences in similarities”.⁴⁴

Pulse Line, 2001 (Plate 11)

Pulse Line, 2001 investigates systems of growth and form by constructing mathematical sequences, based on the Fibonacci series, out of a simple vocabulary of basic units. It is the ‘productive power’ of the basic unit that is repeated in sequence evolving into this uniquely powerful grid work. The double framework provides mobility and rotation allowing inversion, compaction and extension along its central axis. The grid is built up in several layers at its centre and extends into the viewer’s space and laterally out to full human arm width, implying a *leparello* effect of extension and contraction. It also plays on the notion of equivalence and difference within a mirror reversal principle. As its name implies, *Pulse Line* has a rhythmical beat which marks out the intervals of the progress of the basic units into a whole, complex entity. A Fibonacci spiral of co-ordinates is picked out in the tonal markings of a darker, more reflective blue on the surface structure creating a sense of movement “down designated paths or mazes”.⁴⁵ As Andrew Forge observed of Kenneth Martin’s work, “But it is not just the eye of the beholder that is led along that line: the hand and eye of the artist will first have explored the way”.⁴⁶ The ancient, Celtic spiral reappears in the form of a Fibonacci growth sequence linking the personal, earlier work with these more sophisticated, systemic explorations. This conceptual and intuitive journey of processing is evident in Mais’s *Pulse Line* in her use of hand painted, colour tonality; the ratio of the constructed units to their place in the sequence and ultimately to the whole; and the play and variation of shadows, both in the actuality of light falling on the structure and in the illusionary in terms of painterly touch, and use of colours and layers of glazes. The resultant paradox is one of indeterminacy and concreteness, again illustrating Deleuze’s assertion, “difference is the basic condition of being, and repetition is an effect of its ‘productive power’”.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Alloway, *Op. Cit.*, p.10

⁴⁵ Andrew Forge, “On Kenneth Martin’s Writings” in *Kenneth Martin* (cat), Tate Gallery, London, 1975, p.12

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Williams, *Op. Cit.*, p.244

HILARIE MAIS' WORK WITHIN A FEMINIST CONTEXT

Andreas Huyssen observed that modernism “constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its other”.⁴⁸ This statement clearly delineates the crisis in American modernism in its search for formalist purity and denial of language, whether visual or symbolic, when it was confronted by feminist activism and postmodernist deconstruction during the 1970s. The power of American feminism to challenge the particular Greenbergian version of modernism (with its reductivist search for purity and insistence on the distinct division between painting and sculpture) is evident in Mais’s final New York series of works, *Weapons*, (Plate 2) completed in 1980 in Alexander Calder’s studio. Mais’s works offer a confronting assault on modernism’s exclusion and its fear of contamination.

This series of six, compact, hand-held, domestic yet threatening implements were made in direct contrast to the light, tensile works of her earlier practice. The density and weight of each piece belies its purported use. Although the individual works acknowledge and imply a homage to women’s work and handicraft in the textured and rubbed surfaces, these are in fact menacing weapons. *Washboard* is as much an impaling instrument as it is an implement that is a symbol of women’s domestic work; *Scrape* looking something like a butter scaper could literally scrape your face off; *Key* resembles a perverse key for a sadistic chastity belt; and the eponymous *Weapon* “is like a religious icon that could literally gouge your eyes out”.⁴⁹ As for hinting at a woman’s handbag, *Clasp* has all the subtlety of a thumb-screw, which leaves *Bird*, on target like a deadly cross-bow arrow. These are defiant and angry works, the right tools for the job.

These very personal responses to women’s marginality and the pervasive violence in her immediate neighbourhood in New York are indebted to the highly visible and vocal American feminism, particularly in the visual arts.⁵⁰ They also signal a major shift in her work to a more autobiographical mode and a compact scale. This is doubly emphasised as these works were produced in Alexander Calder’s huge, hangar-like

⁴⁸ Andreas Huyssen, *After the great divide*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, p.vii, quoted in Sue Rowley, “Going Public: Getting Personal” in Catriona Moore (ed), *Dissonance:Feminism and the Arts 1970-90*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, 1994, p.217

⁴⁹ Hilarie Mais, taped interview with the author, 20 May 2004

⁵⁰ Reference to her ‘broad anger’ about the position of women is made in Maggie Gilchrist, “Male monoliths, female symbols”, *Art and Australia* Vol. 25 No.2 Summer 1985, p.211 and reference to violence in New York is mentioned in the taped interview with the author conducted 20 May, 2004

studio, a space so cavernous that Mais responded by exploring ideas of containment and restraint, making small works which with she could physically connect. They mark a significant change from the airy, tensile free-standing floor pieces of *Fence* and *Pandora*, which engaged directly with the viewer's space, to condensed, wall-based, eye-to-eye confrontations. Artists draw upon multiple and diverse sources for inspiration. A series of wall sculptures in a Picasso survey exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1980 provided valuable stimulus. Of specific feminist interest were the artists Miriam Schapiro, Louise Bourgeois and Linda Benglis.

Huyssen's references to 'exclusion' and 'contamination' are particularly relevant to feminism in the visual arts in the late 1970s and 1980s and would have had specific resonance for Mais and her *Weapons* series. In a sense, this series, the last of her metal works, alludes to the major changes ahead for Mais as a woman and an artist. The handcrafted, gaudily painted wooden, 'iconic subjectivities' and Celtic spirals that Mais created in Australia until 1986, were a contemporary, feminist response to major life changes such as migration, marriage and childbirth. These works drew upon a range of sources including British Romanesque architecture and design, British constructivist influences such as Victor Pasmore's hand-made reliefs from the early 1960s, William Morris's arts and craft movement as well as central core, feminist imagery. This mining of her visual and cultural heritage, using all available remnants in much the same way as women's craftwork, extended to her use of the packing cases as the material for her early works in Australia. These works were also a response to the strangeness of Australia: its intense light, the strikingly vibrant colours in the flora and much of the bird life, as well as its social conservatism at the time. Some of these early 'iconic subjectivities' as Mais calls them, are sexually provocative. This is the case for *Source* 1982 and *Seed* 1983 while others, like her *Dialogue* series 1983, which include the works *A.Exec*, *North* and *South*, painted in the muted palette of the grey scale, offer a critique of her feelings of alienation, being the 'other' in the new world and, of her changed circumstances as a married woman, mother and migrant. It was important for Mais to clearly state who she was in this new community.

Mais acknowledges Miriam Schapiro as instructive. From the mid 1960s, Schapiro, then a successful hard-edge geometric painter, began to incorporate subtle references to herself and her aspirations as well as to central core imagery into works such as the

Shrine series and of particular importance to Mais, in her major work, *Ox* 1968 (Plate 5). From the 1970s onwards, Schapiro's inclusion of women's traditional craft work, decoratively painted surfaces and shaped canvases which reference the feminine (with images such as fans, hearts and houses), in her collage constructions called 'femimages' concurred with Mais's support for women's crafts challenging the mainstream 'high arts'. Schapiro was selected to participate in William Wright's 1982 Biennale of Sydney and visited Australia.

Her influence is evident in an early series of Australian works by Mais called *Past Imperfect* 1984 (Plate 3). A small wooden version of *Ox*, painted black with a mirror inserted into the central hollow of the letter "O" (central core imagery) is the uppermost piece in a series of five wall sculptures. The mirror references a series of earlier Schapiro works entitled *Shrine*, in which a mirror occupied the fourth compartment of a vertical, painted tower. The other compartments symbolised important aspects of her identity: the top compartments contained aspirations; the second, references to art history; and in the third, each held an egg, Schapiro's symbol of the artist herself. These paintings done in the early 1960s were her most autobiographical. Schapiro intended that in looking into the mirror she would find future images and by inference, that she was continuing to reveal her identity as a woman and an artist.⁵¹ Schapiro was recognised as an inspiring teacher and, one surmises, her presence in 1982 at the Biennale, would have been valuable and encouraging for Mais, as a woman artist.

The following analysis offers a feminist reading based on the writings of the French theorist, Julia Kristeva, on a cycle of Mais's works produced in Australia, from 1984 to 1997. The three works concerned form the basis of a celebration of a specifically female cycle, from expectancy to motherhood to her elder daughter's entry into womanhood. Kristeva's premise that the mother's body, as the site of primary repression of the feminine semiotic within the male symbolic order is unrepresentable and therefore in modernist terms, unrepresentable, is drawn from three essays, "Powers of Horror", "Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini" and "Giotto's Joy". Mais's female cycle works that will be considered within this particular feminist framework are *Waiting* 1984, *Doors: The Maze* 1987 and *Night Echoes* 1997.

⁵¹ The above paragraph is a paraphrase from Paula Wynell Bradley, "Miriam Schapiro: The feminist transformation of an Avant-garde artist", PhD thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ann Arbor, 1983, p.34

Throughout these three selected works run some important threads: the mother/daughter relationship and its signification of (her)itage, evolutionary continuity and change; the importance of colour and the relational qualities of colour which invest each underlying structure with an evocation of embodied presence; and the structural progression from spiral to grid, from talismanic, surface structure to the very matrix of growth and form. Within these works is the representation of the unrepresentable: the feminine, the ambiguous, shifting 'other'. As Elizabeth Grosz observes: "Artistic and symbolic production is founded on an unspeakable and unrepresentable debt to the mother's body; the feminine and the maternal are...the unrepresentable grounds for representation".⁵² In light of Kristeva's theory, Mais's sequential, relational working processes could be seen to describe the working tension between the maternal semiotic, that is the tonality and rhythm of painting and the paternal symbolic of syntax, logic and structuring that is her process.⁵³

Waiting 1984 (Plate 12)

In this work there are two entwined spirals that at their centres have little fingers, reminiscent of the foetus in utero. It was created after the birth of her first child, a daughter. It is an homage to that period of expectancy and of Mais's personal experience of the eternal cycle of life passed through the female line, that fundamental, differentiating function between men and women. As Kristeva observed: "By giving birth, the woman enters into a contract with her mother, she becomes, she is her own mother; they are the same continuity differentiating itself."⁵⁴ Spirals are ancient symbols of infinity and renewal and Mais's awareness of her Celtic heritage was activated when she saw the exhibition, *English Romanesque Art: 1066 to 1200*, at the Hayward Gallery London in July 1984. The spiral also indicates that mother and daughter are linked through a specific, female (her)itage. Kristeva's statement of 'same continuity differentiating itself' is suggestive of recursive systems of growth and form, as mapped

⁵² Elizabeth Grosz, "Feminist theory and the art of politics", *Dissonance: feminism and the arts 1970-1990*, Allen and Unwin in association with Artspace, St Leonards, 1994, p.147

⁵³ Reference to Melanie Eastburn's interview with Hilarie Mais, "Hilarie Mais: Time and Sculpture", *World Sculpture News* Vol.8 No.4, 2002,p.38 and Elizabeth Grosz, "Feminist theory and the art of politics", *Dissonance: feminism and the arts 1970-1990*, Allen and Unwin in association with Artspace, St Leonards, 1994, p.148

⁵⁴ Julia Kristeva, "Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini", *Desire for Language: A semiotic approach to Literature and Art*, translated by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S.Roudiez, Columbia University Press, 1980, p.239

out on a grid in spiral form by a Fibonacci series of co-ordinates. In this early work, Mais presents the unrepresentable, the 'prior-to' language and structure, the threshold, filter, membrane "where 'nature' confronts 'culture'", that is the mother's body, within the Celtic symbol of the infinite.⁵⁵ The symbolic, male principle as rational organising spiral is imbued with the semiotic, 'threshold' of the mother's body where ambiguity, slippage and alterity reside. *Waiting* has the same handpainted glazed quality of the earlier constructivist works, and it is the meditative blue glazes that enliven the rhythms of the entwined spirals, between 'becoming' and 'being'.

Doors: The Maze 1987 (Plate 13)

Kristeva's lament reverberates throughout this stark and powerful work:

"Throughout a night without images but buffeted by black sounds; amidst a throng of forsaken bodies beset with no longing but to last against all odds...I have spelled out abjection."⁵⁶

This first grid had a previous incarnation, gone is the black painted, double grid and the aspirations (those colourful, iconic subjectivities). In their place stands a stark, densely gridded, locked gate over-painted with a post-partum red. The paint is congealed in places. This is a work of wordless abjection yet it blazes the maternal; only unnamed sounds or silence are contained within its quarters. The structure of the symbolic grid (male principle) is one of fortification for containment, yet the raw material of the maternal/feminine (referred to in Kristeva's pre-oedipal location as the 'semiotic', the repressed, pre-existing other) threatens to rupture the symbolic order through the emotive register of colour.⁵⁷ This precarious tension is heightened by a diagonal layering of wooden slats which forms a consistent pattern of red chevrons all pointing to the lock and chain at the centre. In this work, Mais honours the unrepresentable, that ambiguous membrane of the mother's body through which the sacred and the profane can pass, where the myriad slippages and differences can co-exist. It is a testament to the process of her maturation, that something so shockingly autobiographical can be transformed

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p.230

⁵⁶ Julia Kristeva, "Powers of Horror" in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An anthology of changing ideas*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1992, p.1015

⁵⁷ Paraphrasing of paragraphs from Elizabeth Grosz, "Feminist theory and the art of politics", *Dissonance: feminism and the arts 1970-1990*, Allen and Unwin in association with Artspace, St Leonards, 1994, p.147 and p.149

through the impersonal grid structure into an equally potent, though more universal symbol of life's conundrums. It represents the reclamation of the closed system of the grid from a particular identification with Greenbergian formalism and 1960s minimalism. It is Mais's specifically feminist subversion of the grid that evokes such a powerful and embodied presence.

***Night Echoes* 1997 (Plate 14)**

The luminous blue tondo with colours ranging from warm cerulean tones through manganese to cooler cobalt tones, shimmers subtly against the wall. It is a dedication from a mother to her daughter who is on the threshold of becoming a woman. In Italy, traditionally, tondi were round, painted trays presented to the mother to celebrate the birth of a child. It also came to mean "circular painting or relief carving."⁵⁸ In this instance, rather than celebrating an actual birth, this relief construction is a celebration of passage or transition, acknowledging entry into a female lineage. This tondo acknowledges a relationship of equals, the daughter's relationship with "the body of the mother, with which she has to identify into her maturity," unlike a son who must differentiate himself from the mother.⁵⁹ *Night Echoes* is a non-hierarchical structure of circle and grid, overlaid with luminous blue glazes whose subtle and shifting variations play with differences and similarities and this effect is doubled by the ghosted shadows on the wall between the slats of the grid.

This work is rich in female symbolism: the weft and weave of life is inferred in the internal grid structure and highlighted by the shifting colour register; the circle as an ancient symbol of infinity and renewal as well as central core motif of feminism; the pulsating contraction and expansion created by the shifting perspective of the grid and its ghosted shadows, mirrors the birth process; and, most importantly, it celebrates the passage of time marked in corporeal cycles on the female body. *Night Echoes* reverses the unrepresentable status of such abject phenomena as menstrual cycles and childbirth, the embodied symbols of female continuity, presenting instead a sacred space within which to contemplate life's unrelenting pulse through time.

⁵⁸ 'Tondo', *The Grove Dictionary of Art Online*, (Oxford University Press, Accessed 21 September, 2004) <<http://www.groveart.com.virtual.anu.edu.au>>

⁵⁹ Hilary Robinson, "Border crossings: womanliness, body, representation" in Katy Deepwell (ed), *New Feminist Art Criticism: Critical Strategies*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1995, p.143

CONCLUSION

“ I see my work over time as being a spiralling process of accumulating experience and constant transformation, the work of the past interlocking with the work of the present.”⁶⁰

Hilarie Mais has taken the grid, that reductivist symbol of American minimalism, and reinvested this powerful motif with language, through the use of contradiction and paradox, everything that the minimalist's had tried to reject. Fundamental to this development is her British artistic and intellectual base, the influence of the constructivists such as Kenneth Martin, and their investigations into recursive systems within which repetition leads to paradox and change. The Deleuzian concept of repetition and difference is exemplified within these concerns.

The impact of feminism, its concern for re-establishing the 'relation of experience to discourse' that was denied by the 1960s minimalist aesthetic is also an important factor in her development.⁶¹ For Mais, the resolution of these two powerful and radically different influences found its most receptive expression in something more akin to a fugue; a meta-system of structural and conceptual complexity that incorporates many voices, many viewpoints. The distance of Australia from the 'centres' created a space where these multiple viewpoints, sometimes in conflict, at other times converging, can be seen and interpreted as a totality.

⁶⁰ Hilarie Mais quoted in Graeme Sturgeon, *Contemporary Australian Sculpture*, Craftsman House, Roseville, 1991, p.52

⁶¹ Stoops, *Op. Cit.*, p.9

CHAPTER THREE

Case Study: Fiona Hall

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INTRODUCTION

Memory and loss are key themes in the work of Fiona Hall, celebrating that which is obsolete, marginal or threatened with extinction. These themes remain constant through the intensely personal works of the 1980s to her more political and public works from the 1990s onwards dealing with issues of ecological threat and the consequences of colonisation. Her work harnesses the anarchic forces of sensual delight and theatre to challenge meta-systems of knowledge, memory and power. It is her use of strategies of European systems of order, the very systems she critiques, to excavate and retrieve other systems of naming and placing, other identities and narratives, that gives her work its edgy, yet poised, balance.

Hall moved from photography to hybrid sculptural forms, including installation, to create her own world, in a sense, her own museum: an ordered and catalogued place of wonder and beauty. Though critical of past discourses, creating her own 'museum' gives her the power to define new sets of questions, "unmasking...previous structures", in the process.¹

Embodied in her works is the importance of touch. Hall brought hand-built works, made from cheap, available domestic products from behind the photographic screen into full view and engagement with the viewer, with all the attendant wonder and delight of a Victorian 'cabinet' museum. Touch, the tactile quality of the materials she has selected, is "... (the) ways in which the sexuality and corporeality of the subject leave their traces or marks on the texts produced".² For Hall, intuitively and intellectually, these embodied processes or "sexual signatures" are significant indicators in her move from photography to sculptural practices. They are part of her essential vocabulary of form and process.³

¹ Stephen Jay Gould, *Dinosaur in a Haystack*, Penguin Books, London, 1997, p.418

² Elizabeth Grosz, "Sexual Signatures: Feminism After the death of the Author" in *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*, Routledge, New York, 1995, pp.9-24, p.18. cited in Marsha Meskimmon, *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*, Routledge, London, 2003, p.3

³ *ibid.* Taken from the title of Elizabeth Grosz's essay.

Familiar themes and imagery recur throughout Hall's body of work, as she plumbs particular conceptual and political systems. Her signature themes of system structures, (botany and lately zoology in the form of threatened species such as frogs, bats, coral reefs and sea creatures) in natural history and the domestic sphere, in terms of materials and handcraft, are analogous to the ancient wax tablets of mnemonic places in classical artificial memory.

These thematic 'wax tablets' establish the basic units of her vocabulary and become the stage upon which a range of conceptual concerns such as postmodernism, feminism, ecology and postcolonialism play out their conflicts in a theatre of contradictions. Hers is a grand project, retrieving lost languages, marginalised activities, threatened plant and animal forms, forgotten and submerged histories. This recycling and reworking of familiar, yet strange territory is encapsulated in a quote from Hall, which, although dating from 1986 is still relevant to her current working methods:

“Every once in a while, whilst climbing the hill on this path, you find yourself in an area which you have traversed before but you are at a higher elevation.”⁴

ESTABLISHING HER PRACTICE IN THE 1970s

Fiona Hall's interest in science, particularly botany, and in taxonomic systems can be traced to her childhood background. Her mother was a physicist at the CSIRO and her father, a telephone linesman. Both parents were committed naturalists and bushwalkers and were politically radical in their views. These formative influences underlie her continuing speculations on the ecological relationship between nature and culture.⁵ Her artistic instincts began in childhood and were supported and encouraged by her parents, as Hall indicated in an interview: “Never once was there any indication that my interests in drawing, painting and visual things were silly”.⁶ She commenced her art training at the National Art School in Sydney in 1972.

⁴ Tim Morrell, *Some Provincial Myths: Recent Art from Adelaide*, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide, 1987, n.p.

⁵ This introductory paragraph is a paraphrase of Gael Newton, “Fiona Hall: Retro-Spect Leura's Theme” in Stuart Koop (ed), *A Small History of Photography*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 1997, pp.59 and 60.

⁶ Deborah Stone, “In search of art that's out of the ordinary”, *The Sunday Age*, 20 July 1997, p.6

The National Art School in the early 1970s, like other art institutions, was fairly academic in its curriculum design with rigid divisions between the various disciplines. Although the Director, Peter Laverty, introduced photography in 1971, the facilities were very primitive and it was not regarded as a subject major. Ron Robertson-Swann had returned to Australia from Britain and was teaching part-time at the National Art School sculpture department, bringing with him the influence of the British sculptor, Anthony Caro. Hall commenced at a time when students had to choose between painting and sculpture majors. Although she chose painting, and spent time “hanging around the sculpture department”, it was photography that enthused and motivated her even though it was not regarded as a major subject.⁷ One of her photography lecturers, George Schwartz, was particularly inspiring and introduced her to the two and a quarter inch format in black and white photography. He was a Viennese photographer, whose career began as a painter and who had been stimulated by a range of artists and art movements including Dada and Surrealism as well as the *artistes fantastique*, Bruegel the Elder and Arcimboldo. Apart from teaching basic photographic compositional techniques, Schwarz shared his interests with his students by bringing in monographs and books on art and photography.⁸

Hall's photograph for her final year presentation, *Leura* 1974, is a richly, textured composition. As Gael Newtown notes: “it (*Leura*) could be placed within a rather peculiarly American fusion of European ‘New Objectivity’ with the literary theory/cum philosophy of vitalism of the 1920s, as in Edward Weston's work but elaborated by later ‘mystic realists’ like Minor White”.⁹ Hall graduated from the National Art School with a Diploma in Painting in 1975. She spent the next six years, 1976 to 1981, in Europe, London and New York, staying away from Australia “long enough to undergo change”.¹⁰ Significantly, for her photographic practice, she was a photographic assistant to English landscape photographer, Fay Godwin, in London from 1977 to 1978. Hall continued her own photographic practice during this period and was included in a group exhibition at the Creative Camera Gallery in London in 1977. She left London for New York in 1979 to commence postgraduate studies in photography.

⁷ Deborah Hart, “Fertile interactions: Fiona Hall's garden”, *Art and Australia* Vol.36 No.1, 1999, p.204

⁸ George Schwartz, telephone interview with the author, 14 October 2004

⁹ Gael Newton, “Fiona Hall: Retro-Spect Leura's theme”, *A Small History of Photography*, (ed) Stuart Koop, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 1997, p.57

¹⁰ *ibid.*

TRANSITION IN THE 1980s

Between 1979 to 1981 Hall completed a Master of Fine Arts in photography at the Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester Institute of Technology in New York and returned to New York in 1987 to take up an Australia Council residency at Green Street Studios. Hall would have aware of the various postmodern debates current amongst North American artists in the later 1970s and early 1980s. Among these artists were female photographers such as Sherrie Levine, Cindy Sherman, Martha Rosler and the performance artist, Laurie Anderson who were producing work that was being actively championed as exemplary of postmodernist and feminist practice. Yet her influences are varied and idiosyncratic. She encountered the work of the American surrealist photographer, Frederick Sommer, whilst at Rochester. The literary influences that were so evident in the her major transitional works of the 1980s were decidedly European.¹¹

Sommer's photographic works and writings the focus of a revival of interest in the later 1970s and throughout the 1980s. He was regarded as a photographer's photographer; his surrealist collage work did not conform to American formalist concerns. With the ferment of postmodernist and feminist interventions in photography that had begun in the late 1970s, his work received a critical reappraisal. Since the mid-1950s and 1960s, Sommer had received coverage in a number of issues of *Aperture*, one of the leading photographic journals, and by 1980 the retrospective exhibitions, *Venus, Jupiter and Mars* at the Delaware Art Museum and *Frederick Sommer at Seventy-Five* at the California State University had produced two extensive catalogues. There was also a long review and discussion of his work in the Rochester Institute of Technology's photographic journal, *Afterimage* in October 1980.¹² Fiona Hall was studying for her MFA in photography under Nathan Lyons at Rochester from 1979-1982.

Sommer's quirky constructed collages comprise unlikely juxtapositions of detritus, such as chicken entrails, old bits of metal and wood, decimated doll parts, leaves and twigs, torn drypoint book illustrations, papercuts and painting, carefully arranged to maximum effect before being photographed. A similar approach is evident in a number

¹¹ I am indebted to Gael Newton for reference in her article, "Fiona Hall: Retro-spect Leura's Theme" in Stuart Koop's, *A Small History of Photography*, to Frederick Sommer's work and also to the influence of Frances Yates's publication, *The Art of Memory* in relation to Hall's photographic work in the 1980s.

¹² David Jacobs, "Frederick Sommer: The Limits of Photography", *Afterimage* Volume 8 Number 3, October 1980, pp.6-8

of Hall's photographic series produced during the 1980s. Sommer's images *Virgin and Child, St. Anne and Infant St. John* 1966 (Plate 18), gelatin silver print and *Moon culmination* 1951 (Plate 17), gelatin silver print are worth comparing with the following images by Fiona Hall: *Temptation of Eve* 1984 (Plate 15), a gelatin silver print from the *Genesis* series, and *Woman attempts to wake up the earth, Book XVII: Cultivated Trees* 1991 (Plate 16), a Polaroid photograph from the *Historia Non-naturalis* series.

Hall's carefully constructed ground of old roof flashing, bits of galvanised iron and a cut-up metal grater in *Woman attempts to wake up the earth* and the images torn from women's magazines, children's story books and advertising brochures in *Temptation of Eve* resonate with Sommer's rock surface and old, floral linoleum in *Moon culmination* and the scraps of children's book etchings in *Virgin and Child*. Both artists use paint as texture with collage to create a sense of depth behind the screen. It is this mixing of worlds, the fusing of disparate fragments into a 'meta' world of collage that by being photographed becomes something other, a form of disjunctive quotation that becomes a cohesive object.

Equally significant was Hall's exposure to Dame Frances Yates' work on classical memory and memory theatre. This scholarly text, *The Art of Memory*, which was on the reading list at British art schools, may have been introduced to Hall through Sommer's images and writings and his interest in philosophy and aesthetics. Sommer was interested in the writings of the sixteenth century, radical alchemist and medical scientist, Philippus Aureolus Paracelsus. It is this interest in Paracelsus's scientific method derived from his Hermetic training that influenced Sommer's interest in the integration of art, music, physics, aesthetics and philosophy. The photographer, Minor White's comment that, "He (Sommer) contemplates his fragments until they are intimates of his living mind", strongly echoed Yates definition of artificial memory in her text which also includes a discussion of the Hermetic cults and Paracelsus.¹³

For Hall, the revelations of the art of memory provided a vital link between her childhood interests in scientific and botanical systems of classification with the moral, historical, ecological and museological hierarchies of order that she explored and

¹³ "Frederick Sommers American 1905-1999", text from Jonathan Green, *American Photography: A Critical History from 1945 to the present*, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1984 quoted in http://www.masters-of-photography.com/S/sommer/sommer_articles2.html Accessed 8 October 2004

critiqued in her later works. Memory is the first of all meta-systems; all systems of knowledge are the result of memory. *The Art of Memory* in its detailed archaeology of a lost art explores the history of the organisation of memory in the naming and placing of knowledge as a system, its transmission and eventual transmutation into scientific method. Within this larger history are particular rules of practice and descriptions that trigger visual and interpretative associations for Hall. The classical function of artificial memory was to establish a system of symbols and relationships, images and places, that acted as a sort of aide memoire for words and concepts. The ancients regarded memory as the most important component in the rules of rhetoric.

In the 1980s, her photographic practice was particularly influenced by and benefited from postmodernist critiques of deconstruction and the blurring of boundaries between media. That this critique was particularly relevant in photography in Australia, at the time of her return, was fortuitous. Feminism, through its retrieval of marginalised narratives and the elevation of women's handiwork to artwork, was, and continues to be, instructive to Hall's working processes.

It is in the 1980s that Hall's work began to open out in space and, more importantly, in time, 'behind' the frame of the camera lens. She made elaborately constructed sets, similar to those in her early *Antipodean* series, inhabited by bas-relief carved figures in metal as in the *Words* series, or she constructed collaged, multi-layered works incorporating carved, metal objects; photocopied domestic or found objects; painted words, figures and backdrop; and corroded tin, scraps of linoleum and painted fabric. Sculptural space is manipulated in the process of construction; a temporal and spatial process of contemplation, accumulation and experimentation which blurs the boundaries between painting, sculpture and photography. As Rosalind Krauss observed in her 1979 essay, "it is obvious that the logic of the space of postmodernist practice is no longer organised around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material."¹⁴

¹⁴ Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', in Hal Foster (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic*, The New Press, New York, 1998, p. 46

HYBRID SCULPTURAL PRACTICE FROM THE 1990s ONWARDS

The political climate in Australia from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s embraced a critical assessment of the nation's European heritage: the debate about whether Australia should become a republic was revived; Australia's place within a regional Asian context was given greater emphasis than the traditional British and European alliances of the past; and active legal championing of Aboriginal land rights and reconciliation was pursued in the courts and by bodies such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the Aboriginal Reconciliation Council. Issues of national identity and nationhood were being debated from a new and partly postcolonial perspective, and this examination extended to the visual arts.

Concurrent with the broader cultural debate in Australia, Hall's practice expanded from behind the camera lens to a direct, three-dimensional engagement with the viewer. Her repertoire of materials whilst broadly being able to be described as domestic, disposable and consumer goods expanded to include bank notes, ceramics, glass etching, knitting, beading and stitching in forms as diverse as installations, landscape art and a commissioned folly. Her subjects became more public and political, combining ecological and postcolonial concerns. Ironically, as her work became increasingly institutionalised through participation in major biennales, triennales and curated thematic exhibitions both in Australia and overseas, many of the works also challenged museological authority. Hall's strength is her ability to provide a succinct visual mnemonic for complex, layered and, often paradoxical concepts.

This critical assessment of her Western heritage is informed by a self-aware postcolonial identity; an awareness of the paradox of being both highly literate and knowledgeable within a European cultural framework and yet remaining quite separate and distinct from it. Hall's identification with specificity of place, being 'in place', is emphasised in her work through touch as well as through visual and literal analogies. This perspective is informed by a postcolonial discourse and what can be attributed to a very Australian form of feminism in the 1990s: corporeal feminism and its discourse on the ethics of place and being.

Hall's postcolonial focus begins with the reorientation of her foundational matrix, where she uses the existing framework of botany and systems of classification to make alternate systems visible. As she explained: "The research into Western forms of naming and systematic classifying (of) plant species led to a realisation that other cultures and languages also have their own lexicons and attitudes towards, and myths surrounding, plants."¹⁵

Hall's specific postcolonial orientation has been heightened by her artistic associations with the sub-continent, specifically with India and Sri Lanka. She met the Indian artist Nalini Malani in 1996 when they both participated in *96 Containers – Art Across Oceans* in Copenhagen and later that same year at the *2nd Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art* at the Queensland Art Gallery. It was during the *Asia Pacific Triennial* that Hall was introduced to Geoffrey Bawa, the distinguished Sri Lankan architect renowned for his garden estate. Hall has since collaborated with Malani on a joint exhibition project, entitled *Global Liquidity*, shown in Mumbai and Sydney in 1998 and also participated in the *Unpacking Europe* exhibition in Rotterdam in 2001. Since meeting Bawa, with the financial assistance of Asialink, she was the inaugural artist-in-residence at the estate, Lunuganga, in 1999. Since then she has returned four times for residencies at the garden to further her research into the economic botany of tropical plants. Many of the plants form the basis of her ongoing project, *Leaf Litter*.

FIONA HALL'S WORK WITHIN A POSTMODERNIST CONTEXT

Fiona Hall's works during the 1980s were primarily wall-based; photographic collages, photocopied, montaged paper dolls and the carved sardine-can series, *Paradisus Terrestris* 1989. This represented an expansion in her practice, which since the early 1970s had been primarily photographic, and brought the making of the work into the image. Hall's processes revealed the working traces of concepts being explored, intersecting with the domestic and disposable materials being modelled, shaped and manipulated to present multi-layered investigations. The 1990s saw her pursue installation and site-specific formats, moving from a photographic to a hybrid sculptural practice, to express her critique of contemporary social, historical and environmental issues.

¹⁵ Tim Morrell, "Fiona Hall interviewed, Adelaide September 1999" in Suhanya Raffel, *A transit through paradise*, Asialink Centre, University of Melbourne, 1999, p.9

The influence of postmodernism on Hall's practice will be investigated in a specific series of large format polaroid works, *Words* 1989 and also in the work, *Temptation of Eve* 1984 from the *Garden of Eden* series. Derrida's methodology of deconstruction and the postmodernist strategies of "appropriation, site-specificity, impermanence, accumulation, discursivity, hybridisation" as outlined by Craig Owens in his essay, *The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism* will be used to investigate these contexts in her work.¹⁶

The selection of photographic works for investigation within a postmodernist framework is a deliberate choice. Hall's move throughout the 1980s into highly constructed sets, that clearly indicate process and the passage of time determines her sculptural realisation. The sets eventually step out of from behind the lens and occupy their own space and time, potentially actualising memory images in her virtual museum. Nevertheless, the compositional quality, layering and juxtaposition of meanings and the attention to detail evident in her photography continues to inform her sculptural and installation practice.

Hall's retrieval project works on a number of levels and fits well within a postmodernist practice. The concept of memory as system provided a template upon which to develop and explore complex and inverted relationships within the field of photography. Nevertheless, the consciously constructed and theatrically built up imagery, the juxtaposition of unusual and diverse materials within the compositional field, closely modelled on Sommer's work, takes its cue from the places and images, their spatial relation and position with respect to each other that was fundamental to memorising rhetorical orations. The process of placement of these memory aids in the mind was linked to the visualisation of a walk through a palace or temple, noting particular niches in each room and appointing a visually arresting image of a human being in an action symbolising the major idea to be conveyed, in each niche, hence the refrain, places and images. Specifically in relation to the *Words* series, the following dicta from the *Ars Herennium* are especially pertinent:

"We ought, then, to set up images of a kind that can adhere longest in memory. And we shall do so if we establish similitudes as striking as possible; if we set up images that are not many nor vague but active (*imagines agents*); if we assign to

¹⁶ Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', pp.203-235 in Brian Wallis (ed), *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1984, p.208

them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness; if we ornament some of them, as with crowns or purple cloaks, so that the similitude may be more distinct to us; or if we somehow disfigure them, as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more striking, or by assigning certain comic effects to our images, for that, too, will ensure our remembering them more readily....But this will be essential – again and again to run over rapidly in the mind all the original places in order to refresh the images.”¹⁷

As Yates’s commentary on the above passage reveals these are specifically “human figures dramatically engaged in some activity – doing something.”¹⁸

With the incorporation of the memory system into the development of scientific method, museums, from Wunderkammer to later museums of natural history, become a kind of virtual embodiment of a memory system of hierarchised ‘places’ and ‘images’. The evolution of the word ‘museum’ from a term for “ancient Greek temples dedicated to the muses of the arts and sciences” to sites of power which promote the universalising narrative of the victor, is an axis along which Hall explores memory’s other; loss, the discarded, the peripheral and the marginalised.¹⁹ The memory system is most active in the photographs from the *Antipodean* series, 1981 through to the *Historia Non-naturalis* series, 1991. Hall retrieves and reinvents the art of memory through her work.

Hall’s works often refer to major European literary works as is evident in her series, *The Divine Comedy*, based on her reading of Dante Aligheri’s poem. Dante was certainly aware of the Italian translations of the two classical rhetoric texts and as Yates points out, the structure of *The Divine Comedy* is based on the order of places and images for Heaven, reversed in Hell. In the book of the *Inferno*, from which Hall’s *Words* series is derived, Hell is structured in nine concentric circles, each circle or memory system ‘place’ is visualised by an encounter with a human being, sometimes a familiar of Dante’s, who is defiled or disfigured in some way that is an equivalence or example of the particular vice for that place.²⁰ Hall translates the vivid carnality of the poem visually in her *Divine Comedy* series and *Word* series into the equally desolate and comic ‘places for images’.

¹⁷ *Ad Herennium*, III, xxii quoted in Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966, p.10

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ ‘Museum: History: Classical origins’, *The Grove Dictionary of Art Online*, (Oxford University Press, Accessed [10 August 2004]) <<http://www.groveart.com.virtual.anu.edu.au>>

²⁰ Yates, *Op.cit.*, p.96

Hall's visual references reveal an extensive interest in classical mythology and renaissance Christian mythology, as well as a detailed knowledge of the history and philosophy of science, particularly the natural sciences. Hall's interrogations of the contemporary world, in the 1980s, reference the ruins or shards of older systems of classification and convention, both in art and science. For example, the return to classical form during the Renaissance and the French Academy's classical conventions for history painting; a moral, Christian universe where the earth was the centre of the universe and the sun rotated around it, was replaced by the rational universe of the Enlightenment with its Linnean classification in flora and fauna. These interests converge in paradigmatic shifts – ideological, scientifically, historic – and Hall's work plays with the disjunctions inherent in these shifts which determine our perception of the environment. During the 1980s, when her work drew upon a European literary and artistic tradition, she inverted elements of these traditions through the lens of a critical questioning to present polysemous, contemporary allegory in works such as the *Words*, *The Divine Comedy*, *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paradisus Terrestris* series.

The Greenbergian formalist concern, specifically in relation to photography's 'objectivity', its rejection of the past and its belief in a logic of progress is rebuffed throughout these series. Hall's work is deliberately theatrical, of the type that Michael Fried opposed in his essay "Art and Objecthood".²¹ Throughout the 1980s, her work underwent a significant transition from a direct, documentary style to studio based, theatre-set constructions. It is this creation of miniature worlds, in time and space, that eventually bursts forth from behind the lens and evolves into her hybrid sculptural practice.

There is no single, continuous reading. The works draw on a number of paradoxes inherent in a postmodern reading: the use of reproductive technology to frame collaged constructions of detritus, obsolete and obscene materials in luscious and seductive formats; fragments of art historical, mythological and scientific systems montaged with no regard for formal hierarchies of value; and real objects alongside magazine reproductions and photocopies of objects, painted or glued together, all evidence of the artist's process. *Temptation of Eve* from the *Genesis* series 1984, incorporates a number of these collisions. It is a gelatin silver photograph of an elaborately constructed conceit,

²¹ Michael Fried's essay "Art and Objecthood" was first published in *Artforum* June 1967.

portraying as the title of the work states, Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden from the Old Testament's *Book of Genesis*. Hall merges her interest in systems of classification, in this case botany and Christian mythology, with an ascerbic wink at the morality tale of the Temptation. This work attests to allegory as "one text read through another".²²

Temptation of Eve from the Genesis series 1984 (Plate 15)

The ground is a montage of lips torn from women's magazines which provides a luscious, leaf-like underlay. Photocopied and precisely cut-out plant specimens, deep-etched corkscrews and pen knives, a snake and a ladder as well as scumbled, photocopied fragments of "medieval woodcuts showing the scourging of nude women" are arranged over the lip ground.²³ The sources of her imagery range from medieval and botanical texts, to advertising material and to women's magazines, all in reproduction either torn directly from mass media magazines or photocopied and cut-out. There is an evident awareness of Surrealist works and techniques in Hall's photographic series. Not surprisingly, Max Ernst, whose "*trompe l'oeil* fixing of dreams... in his *collage* novels...brilliantly exploits that principle of chance juxtaposition which disorients and disrupts our sense of reality", was an associate of Frederick Sommer.²⁴ Hall also draws on women Surrealists' practice through "the imagery of generation in their work being linked with nature and the cycles of the earth's renewal."²⁵

The discontinuity and disruption caused by collaging different systems of representation into one visual image and Hall's evident disregard of hierarchies within these systems is further complicated by the photographic process which in effect produces a quotation of a collaged and constructed quotation. The photographic process thus bestows an internal consistency, creates a new object, out of disruptive collage. The work acquires a new level of ambiguity, shifting between collage and photographic object. It suggests Hall's interest in creating a cohesive narrative out of disparate, complex and often contradictory voices.

²² Owens, *Op.cit.*, p.204

²³ Newton, *Op.cit.*, p.57

²⁴ Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *A World History of Art*, 5th edition, Laurence King Publishing, London, 1999, p.813

²⁵ Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1991, p.135 cited in Hart, *Op.cit.*, p.206

The central motif: an erect and unfurling lily stamen, resembling a Bacchic thyrus, issues forth a profusion of lips like a fountain which can be read as a renewing cycle, the lips tumbling down only to be drawn up again through the ecosystem of plants. Hall alludes to ancient oppositions, not quite reconciled, which place her work “just outside the garden wall”, on the fringes.²⁶ The garden as a constructed, artificial and ordered space, an oasis in the midst of overwhelming and uncontrolled wilderness, is a metaphor for culture and linear temporality. Yet Hall’s constructed garden celebrates cyclical, orgiastic nature, time as Chronos. Her garden is instead one of profusion, a celebration of renewal - a larger and older tableau that defies the logic of the fall from grace caused by woman’s weaker nature, that precipitated the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This is a carnal, knowing work. As Gael Newton notes, within Hall’s schema, the man-made pen knives “hovering ready to prune and castrate generative power”, are subsumed in this voluptuous eruption.²⁷ One could well imagine them disappearing in the rampant undergrowth of lip-litter like little rusted hulks, only to return to the earth as part of the eternal cycle of renewal. Throughout this work and the *Words* series that follow, boundaries between media, disciplines, elite and popular culture, the sacred and profane, ancient myths and contemporary concerns are transgressed. “The effect is to call into question all the illusions of fixed systems of representation”.²⁸

Words series 1989

The photographic series, *Words* was completed in 1989 following *The Divine Comedy* 1988 series. The primary literary source for both series was Dante Alighieri’s *Inferno*. The *Words* series is stylistically and conceptually complementary to *The Divine Comedy* and was completed about the same time as the *Paradisus Terrestris* 1989 series. Although Hall completed later photographic series, her practice from 1989 onwards became increasingly focussed on modelled sculptural works and installations.

The following images, *Words*, *Write*, *Void* and *Ratio*, four works in the *Words* series, will be considered in light of their postmodern readings. These works are constructed, theatrical sets, echoing the writhing bodies of Signorelli’s *Damned Consigned to Hell* or

²⁶ Kate Davidson, *Garden of Earthly Delights: The work of Fiona Hall* (cat), Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 1992, p.5

²⁷ Newton, *Op.cit.*, p.58

²⁸ David Harvey, ‘The Condition of Postmodernity’, in Charles Jenks (ed), *The Post-modern Reader*, Academy Editions, London, 1992, p.308

the twisted figures at the bottom of Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* in the Sistine Chapel. Scrunched and painted-over fabric is the working ground, alluding to the tactile mess and drapery in an artist's studio. Over this is laid the meticulously carved and modelled, discarded aluminium drink cans, bas-reliefs in the form of human bodies contorted to form letters of the alphabet, the groups spelling out particular words. In the two works, *Words* and *Write*, the figures are placed on low plinths reminiscent of Roman sarcophagi. As in Signorelli's and Michelangelo's frescoes, Hall has emulated a stable, classical structure of the picture plane; pyramidal in the case of *Words* and *Write*, also echoing the framing devices in the originals of altar base and over-arch, and oval in the case of *Void* and *Ratio*.

Yet the eloquence of classical convention, the edifying and uplifting moral pronouncements on the certainty of the Christian universe executed on a grand fresco scale is replaced by intimately sized pronouncements on futility. Like an animator's storyboard, all figures in the four works are freeze-framed in a moment of their endless, miserable calisthenics of the damned. Hall's sophisticated visual punning in the use of groups of human figures to embody words, more specifically language, portrays the decay of the humanist, enlightenment project. The four works in this series that will be discussed are each a visual mnemonic for a particular vice or sin within the rings of Hell: *Ratio* alludes to the Sin of Incontinence, *Write* to Sin of Violence, *Words* to Sin of Fraud and *Void* to the Sin of Betrayal.

In the work, *Write* (Plate 20), the male figure "R" has viciously kicked the female "W" off the plinth as the human letters compete for space on the sarcophagus/stage, reducing the word play to *Rite*. This becomes an exposé of the unholy ritual of language as "the privileged instrument of rational thought" debasing its opposite, irrationality, equated with the female principle.²⁹ There is as much feminist concern and humour present as there is a postmodernist aesthetic at work in these images. As Hall's images of Hell offer the mirror reversal of Paradise, *Write* may also refer to those unwritten histories of the vanquished, who are debased, diminished and excluded.

Void (Plate 22) has the human figures floating above a yawning ovoid vortex, again freeze-framed before being sucked down into the depths of the inferno which amply illustrates the dictionary definition of 'to void' as 'emptying out' and 'cancel'. Meaning

²⁹ Robert Williams, *Art Theory: An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p.238

and convention on many levels are emptied out in this work through profoundly oppositional images. Rather than the renaissance portrayal of the Holy Family in strict hierarchical order, the central female form is in full gynaecological position to form the letter 'O', the full force of the perspectival vanishing point pierces her belly drawing her down to the infernal depths. One assumes her male partner, the letter 'I' holds his head in a gesture of despair. This is not a fecund pairing. These two central figures are framed on the left and right by the human forms of the letters 'V' and 'D', decoded as venereal disease. Perhaps this is drawing a long bow, but there is nowhere to hide the figures' nakedness, nowhere to escape, rather the work is collapsing in on itself. Chaos, corruption and misery abound; it is the allegorical antithesis of stable order and hierarchy, of perspective as "the organization and subordination of nature to the measure of man".³⁰ According to the classical memory system this work amply portrays the vice of infidelity and promiscuity and its attendant punishment or suffering.

In Hall's mnemonic system the male human forms which spell out *Ratio* (Plate 21) play on the Enlightenment's rational, European male view of the 'proportional relation' to the measure of man; evidently a reference to Vitruvius and the proportional relation or balance between the various memory places within a mnemonic system. An inverted reading of this relational value, leads to an image of excess, as the characters play out a scene of pride before a fall. In a postmodern context, *Ratio* provides an exhumed reading of the demise of both the certainty of modernism and its exclusive viewpoint.

Words (Plate 19), the last of the four works under investigation is structurally similar to *Write* with the same number of male and female human letters in position on a sarcophagus/plinth, though the competition for position is not evident. Conceptually, *Words* is specifically linked to rhetorical oration and the visual mnemonic memory system developed by the ancients as an aide memoire for delivering speeches and passing on knowledge. In the mirror-reversed universe of Dante's Hell, words become vehicles for fraud, a vice specific to humanity and a debased form of reason. And in a mirror reversed postmodernist reading, *Words* could be a visual mnemonic for all those lost and marginal systems of knowledge that do not fit within an academy's paradigm. Certainly, Frederick Sommer's photographic and aesthetic work and Francis Yates's excavation of the art of memory from obscurity would be retrieved in this reading.

³⁰ Gael Newton, 'Grant Mudford: Abstraction and Reality', *Art and Australia* Vol. 23 No. 2 1985, p.218

The *Words* series has an equivalence in Dante's technique of writing about grand, moral themes in the crude, local patois of his hometown. Whereas Dante's *Comedy* took the 'low' style of writing used for vulgar and everyday subjects, his intention was to follow the revolutionary rhetoric of the Gospels, by using the local vernacular to convey his moral journey toward a higher understanding.³¹ He meant this work to be accessible. Fiona Hall revisits the vernacular in this series of works through her use of domestic, discarded and mass produced materials, glued and pasted by hand. The deliberate carnality and lewdness of the imagery is also a recognition of the 'corporeal similitude' that was employed to heightened visual effect in a moral Christian universe, in order to make memorable images of the vices that lead to Hell.

The *Words* series represents an accumulation of contradictions, paradoxes and puns both literary and visual. An accretion of space and time is evident in the construction of these elaborate, hand-made allegorical sets. There is no modernist purity, rather a make-do approach with domestic items and even detritus. Allegory, throughout this series of works, is consistent with "the fragmentary, the imperfect and the incomplete".³²

Hall takes the advice of the *Ars Herennium* and creates memorable images by using unusual conjunctions; she beguiles us with beautifully produced, seductive Polaroids yet a second glance reveals the rupture and decay implicit in these works, and, by inference, in all human systems. The *Words* series are meditations on the power of language to structure, classify and ultimately, to exclude so "anything that did not conform to rational thought was eventually discredited, either by direct refutation or by subtle suppression by being pushed to the social and intellectual periphery".³³ *Words*, as a series, remains essentially an example of memento mori, through the presence of sarcophagi and depthless voids, thereby reminding us that in the midst of life we are in death. Hall's is an unforgiving spotlight.

³¹ Paraphrase of paragraph in John Freccero, "Foreword", *The Inferno of Dante*, translated by Robert Pinsky, J.M. Dent, London, 1997, p.xix

³² Owens, *Op.cit.*, p.206

³³ Howard Risatti, 'Psychoanalytical Criticism and Art' in *Postmodern Perspectives: Issues in Contemporary Art*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1990, p. 255

FIONA HALL'S WORK WITHIN A FEMINIST CONTEXT

“Justifications for the relegation of women to the domestic and private spheres have been based on the devaluation of feminine embodiment, which goes back at least to Aristotle’s depiction of man as physiologically superior to woman, as misbegotten or imperfect man”.³⁴

It is appropriate that Aristotle is mentioned. He was the first person to develop an elaborate philosophical and scientific system of knowledge based on the deductive logic that was to become the foundation of Western intellectual history until the Renaissance. In the process he formalised a view of the feminine as secondary to man, a similar view being expressed in Christian mythology as described in the *Book of Genesis*. However, it is Hall’s knowledge of the binominal nomenclature system of classification of Linnaeus, the founder of modern taxonomy in the natural sciences, that is of particular interest in her first and singularly important sculptural work, the series, *Paradisus Terrestris*, completed in 1989. Hall in a sense crosses the Rubicon with this work as it marks a definitive move from the controlled viewpoint of photography, by presenting her constructed worlds as sculptural forms that occupy space and engage the participation of the viewer.

Hall’s process of “cultural archaeology” unearthed the “domestic and the private spheres”, and brought them into the light of reappraisal.³⁵ This domestic and by inference, diminished domain, critiques the larger, real-world of public and political concerns. Hall inverts established orders: humble, obsolete materials found around the home are brought to the foreground, forbidden subjects are placed centre stage in her work and the central thread of touch, both hers (as the artist) and sexual, is woven into the work. The materials and her hand-worked process of making (whether knitting, stitching, beading, carving and moulding - in fact her use of craft skills associated with the feminine) provide a double unmasking of preconceived assumptions. Revisiting Aristotle’s assumption, Hall summons the domestic in all its tropes to destabilise the so-called “natural order of things” that implies women’s inferiority and ensures their continuing invisibility.

³⁴ Penelope Deutscher, ‘The Body’ in Barbara Caine (ed), *Australian Feminism: a companion*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p.11

³⁵ First quote is from Timothy Morrell, “Fiona Hall”, *Art from Australia Eight Contemporary Views*, Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency, Melbourne, 1991, p.46. The second quote is from Penelope Deutscher, ‘The Body’ in Caine, *Op.cit.*, p.11

“The materiality is significant to its meaning”.³⁶ As poststructuralist feminist, Judith Butler notes: “*bodies that matter* is not an idle pun...to know the significance of something is to know how and why it matters, where ‘to matter’ means at once ‘to materialise’ and ‘to mean’.”³⁷ Hall’s work has the quality of lived, embodied experience, through the selection of the materials, their crafting and placement. It is a precise visual and very female mnemonic that summons forth the parallel and intersecting allusions that Hall has invested in the work.

Within this section, two bodies of work will be examined in a feminist context: from the *Paradisus Terrestris* series 1989, the following works will be considered *Celery* (*Apium graveolens*), *Passionfruit* (*Passiflora edulis*) and *Black Boy* (*Xanthorrea australis*).

The second body of work is *Medicine bundles for the non-born child* 1993. Both series employ the formal device of a divide, whether actual or literal, a kind of principle of mirror reversal as implied in the classical aphorism ‘as above so below’. Throughout all her *Paradisus Terrestris* series, the trees and plants sprout from the top of the cans while the sexual imagery referring to root systems (pun intended) is placed below, and, like a slow strip tease, given more emphasis by the rolled down lid of the can. In other works, such as *Medicine Bundles for the non- born child*, the aphorism is treated literally, as in the play on the real versus simulacra in the phrase, ‘the real thing’.

***Paradisus Terrestris* series 1989**

The emblematic sardine tins first appeared in the photograph, *Pride* 1985 (in the photographic series *Seven Deadly Sins*) as containers for various found objects; the tins then metamorphose into the wonderful peep show line-up of botanical specimens eroticised through association with human erogenous zones in *Paradisus Terrestris* 1989 (or could it be a botanic taxonomy of human sexuality?). The cans and their taxonomic theme are revisited in *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled* 1996 which invoke marginalised Aboriginal naming systems, and later in 1999, as a subset which explores the sacred and social role of plants in Sri Lanka. The sardine tin as a vessel of meaning, literally and metaphorically, carries Hall’s investigations of naming and order in hierarchies of classification into richer and deeper territories.

³⁶ Marsha Meskimmon, “Desire and the inscribed body”, *Women making art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*, Routledge, London, 2003, p.94

³⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’*, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, p.32 quoted in Meskimmon, *ibid.*

Hall's fascination with life's fundamental contradictions is abundantly evident in these works, through which she "explores desire as a multifaceted force working at the level of 'surfaces and intensities', making connections across differences".³⁸ Hall created a metallic garden of earthly delights through the silvery surfaces of sardine tins and the aluminium of soft drink cans. She shaped and coaxed these discarded materials like skin to produce peep-show miniatures of human sexual stimulation (the karma sutra for colonial export) and detailed, botanical renderings of fruits, flowers and trees.

The multi-layered references link her mythological interest in the Garden of Eden with her interest in classics, art history and natural history. There are particular affinities with Hieronymous Bosch's morality triptych, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Hall, like Bosch, creates her own fantastical worlds where she "is simultaneously the dreamer and the judge of dreams, actor and stage-manager in one person" and like Bosch, she "lays bare the contradictions of (her) age and makes them the subject of (her) artistic productions, ...(raising) the everyday world to the level of high art".³⁹ There is an evident connection between Bosch's symbols of strawberries and fish for lust and lewdness with Hall's use of sardine cans and botanised, human sexual specimens.

Her extensive knowledge of botanical compendiums from Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*, through the florelegiums of "Basilius Besler's, *Hortus Eystettensis*...and Robert John Thornton's, *The Temple of Flora*" is also evident.⁴⁰ Yet, it is her title reference to John Parkinson's *Paradisi in sole Paradisus Terrestris*, a clever pun that literally translates as "Park-in-son's Earthly Paradise", which is closer in ironic intent to her, Hall's, garden of earthly delights. She is absolutely at play in this work, intellectually, conceptually and physically.

There are other conceits and inversions operating in Hall's earthy paradise. The complete series comprises twenty-three, secret garden works that include native Australian trees and food-bearing plants with plants and fruit from England and its colonies, brought to Australia either to provide food and trade for the convicts and settlers or as garden plants to soften the harsh realities of an unfamiliar landscape.

³⁸ Meskimmon, *Op.cit.*, p.105

³⁹ Charles de Tolnay, *Hieronymous Bosch*, translated Michael Bullock and Henry Mins, Methuen and Co, London, 1966, pp. 30 and 49.

⁴⁰ Hart, *Op.cit.*, p.203

In each piece, the botanical structure of the plant is mimicked in the human anatomical modelling. It is this miniaturisation, a subversion of a late 19th century decorative arts fashion in Australia for filigree silver curios using native fauna, flora and aboriginal people, which creates a new feminist, ecological reading. Hall's miniaturisation ensures an equivalence between human erogenous zones and botanical specimens. This is not the usual hierarchy of homo sapiens or "wise man" at the top of the ladder of social Darwinist progress, or at the centre of the world as master of God's bountiful gifts. Linnaean taxonomy in botany is based on a classification system requiring an analysis of the reproductive organs of plants. Hall's interest in this accepted European version of taxonomy is applied to the humans so that the human being is labelled within nature, rather than separate from it. It is our inclusion within nature as a part of Linnaeus's taxonomy, as participants rather than as a separate form of special creation, that was both revolutionary and highly contested. Conversely, Hall's rendition also celebrates the sensuality of plant forms, explicitly acknowledging their role in plant reproduction. The linking of libidinally aroused human sexual organs with beautifully crafted plant forms is a witty interpretation of Erasmus Darwin's erotic poem, *The Loves of the Plants*, published in 1789. As Hall herself has stated, "For most of us living in a world of manufactured products we tend to think that we are looking out at nature and forget that we *are* nature."⁴¹

These works are definitely not constructed with "the apparatus of the gaze", rather they have been created with the viewer in mind to elicit many and varied ways of seeing: the double take, the sly glance, the curious peek, the frank stare and close-up peer into their deliciously shocking intimacy.⁴² The "bodily presence and participation" of the viewer "is at the centre of Hall's project".⁴³ In the gallery, this series of twenty-three works is normally hung in a line at eye level. Yet, Hall's miniaturisation forces the viewer to move physically closer to each work, to inhabit its space, before it will reveal its delight, thus feminising the museum space, equating the gallery wall with a domestic mantelpiece or a display cabinet for the precious family silver.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.204

⁴² Elizabeth Grosz, "Naked" in Terry Smith (ed), *Impossible Presence: Surface and Screen in the Photographic Era*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2001, p.219

⁴³ Juliana Engberg, "Adam and Eve", *Art and Australia* Vol.32 No.1, 1994, p.156

Hall's works evoke pleasure, balanced by an ever-present sense of unease. Although a process of metamorphosis is present in the transformation of discarded, domestic packaging into intricate and precious metal sculptures, the juxtaposition of the razor sharp quality of cut tin and aluminium formed into the soft petals of flowers and female genitalia or the succulent thrusting of a plant stamen or male penis, teeters on the edge between pleasure and pain.

The following works from the *Paradisus Terrestris* series will be considered within a feminist framework: *Celery* (*Apium graveolens*), *Passionfruit* (*Passiflora edulis*) and *Black Boy* (*Xanthorrea australis*). All the works use the same materials and format: soft drink cans have been recycled to create sexual forms, carefully hand shaped with the same attention to detail as the botanic renderings above them, then placed in reused sardine cans as a peep-show line up. The dualities of good/bad, public/private, socially accepted behaviour/taboo are played out physically in these works above and below the sardine can; below being doubly emphasised in the sardine can lid which has been wound down with a key.

The botanic specimens selected by Hall for this first series of *Paradisus Terrestris* all grow in Australia; some are native, others have been transported and transplanted here as food or for their potential commercial value, still others as floral reminders of 'Home' in the harsh and exotic environment of Australia. Sir Joseph Banks, the English botanist who accompanied Captain Cook on *HMB Endeavour* and recorded many examples of Australia's native flora, was involved in the later colonisation of New South Wales as a penal settlement. He ensured that European and other colonial plants suitable for cultivation in a Mediterranean climate were sent out with the First Fleet and by later shipments.⁴⁴ Linnaeus's taxonomy was introduced to the new penal settlement of Australia via Banks and is intimately tied to the unfolding colonial project.

⁴⁴ Patricia Fara, *Sex, Botany and Empire: The Story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks*, Icon Books, Cambridge, 2003. p.142 and 151.

Celery (Apium graveolens) (Plate 23)

Although not a native to Australia, celery was certainly cultivated as a food source and used as a medicinal herb. Hall has captured in exquisite detail the thrusting, ridged stalks with their frilly head of leaves. These qualities are translated below in the photographic precision of her close-up of the act of copulation emphasising the erect penis embedded within the frilled labial lips. The clinical detail of the anatomically rendered act leaves little to the imagination in terms of who is on top. Once sexual references were erased from botany in the 19th century, it became the one science that women were encouraged to study in prudish Victorian England. Hall, with the precision of a watchmaker, has lifted the lid, peeled back the veil so to speak, from such hypocrisy.

Passionfruit (Passiflora edulis) (Plate 24)

Another non-native of Australia, the common black passionfruit quickly became naturalised to the point that, until recently, it was a ubiquitous presence in most Australian backyards. 'Passion' in the botanical sense refers to the fact that the stamens in this flower are cross-shaped, thus referring to the crucifixion. This is certainly not the passion that Hall refers to below the curling aluminium vines and leaves in *Passionfruit (Passiflora edulis)*. Hall uses the motif of the three pronged, curled leaf and replicates this through the placement of the hand in an act of sexual self-stimulation on the 'petals' of the vulva. Arousal alludes to bursting ripe fruit, spilling forth its seeds and juice in fecund plenitude.

Black Boy (Xanthorrea australis) (Plate 25)

This is perhaps one of the cheekiest works in the series as its visual and titular punning are so specific. *Xanthorrea australis* is a native of Australia and has a long history of uses by indigenous Australians, particularly those activities associated with men such as hunting: the long shaft was used for making spears and the sticky sap was traded between tribes as a useful adhesive for attaching sharpened flint to spear heads and cutting tools. In Hall's splendid rendition, the long shaft with its ovoid tip trusts upwards from a circular skirt of filigreed, long grass leaves. The common title 'Black Boy' refers both to the denigrating caricatures of miniaturized, indigenous Australians, usually male, standing with spear in hand and, to the virility of the nude male member.

It is this second reference that Hall has harnessed to proud effect.⁴⁵

Throughout this series Hall emphasizes humans' place within nature and that the survival of human and plant species is dependent upon sexual reproduction. In fact, "plants and bodies share capillary systems, sex organs, osmotic membranes".⁴⁶

Nevertheless, an important corollary of this work is her challenge to the prudish moral view that sex through arousal, masturbation and copulation, is a taboo subject, particularly for women.

Irony continues through her intentional and detailed crafting, in the meticulous manner that one would expect to be applied to an Amish quilt, of refuse into aroused and explicit human sexual acts and plant specimens. In Hall's eyes, even the plants do it; we are part of nature.

Paradisus Terrestris is an important body of work for Hall. It has become the basis for a "multifaceted rendering of a concept" to expand and grow "into several vastly different mediums and modes of practice".⁴⁷ Returning to the function of memory places, the concept of *Paradisus Terrestris* performs the role of wax tablet, a base which can then be overlaid with new images and ideas. Specifically, she uses the concept of the series to explore postcolonial and ecological issues in such works as *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled* and her later explorations of tropical flora in Sri Lanka. These and related works including *Fern Garden* 1998 as well as *Cash Crop*, *Dead in the Water* and *Drift Net* from the *Fieldwork* series 1998-99, will be explored within a post colonial framework in a later section of this chapter.

Medicine bundles for the non-born child 1993 (Plate 26), continues the investigation into Hall's sculptural works within a feminist framework. This is a discomfiting, almost wrathful work. It is definitely not the sort of heirloom hand-me-down that any mother would be proud of. Although not instantly apparent, Hall returns to her original matrix

⁴⁵ The term "Black boy" was first noted for its usage in reference to indigenous Australians in 1846: "these trees called Blackboys by the colonists, from the resemblance they bear, in the distance, to natives". cited in *Oxford English Dictionary* (online), accessed 28 October 2004, <www.dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry>

⁴⁶ Christopher Chapman, "Carnivorous Plants" *Art and Australia* Volume 32 Number 1 1994, p.97

⁴⁷ Timothy Morrell, "Fiona Hall interviewed, Adelaide September 1999" in Sunhanya Raffel, *A transit through paradise*, Asialink Centre, University of Melbourne, 1999, p.11

of botany and domestic process by using knitted strips of used Coca-Cola cans; this becomes her wax tablet upon which to inscribe a feminist and ecological critique. The displacement in this work is extreme. This is not the product of a Country Women's Association knitting bee fundraiser, nor is it the maternal offering of love and anticipation to the unborn babe. This work is still-born, stopped in its toxic tracks. It exposes the underbelly of the claim to be the 'real thing' made the multinational corporation that is Coca-Cola Amatil. Hall's understated metaphor of a baby's layette, feeding bottles and teething ring knitted in razor sharp strips of aluminium attacks the soft, fleshy matter of our senses and elicits a very visceral response: it sets teeth on edge, sends a shiver up the spine and goes right to the core. This beautifully crafted, nasty, little installation goes to the heart of the matter; that matter being, the inversion of nurture and sustenance by exposing the hypocrisy of the empty pretence of the 'real thing'. Taking Butler's and Meskimmon's linking of materiality and meaning in process, Hall knows the significance of what she means to convey in her choice of materials and their arrangement is appropriate to, and serves, her layered, barbed meanings. It is a seamless transition and evokes the corporeal reality of feminism, particularly Australian feminism, that is an active principle in Fiona Hall's works.

The original significance of the medicinal benefits of both the coca and cola leaves is lost in the highly refined synthetic stimulant that is now marketed as Coca-Cola worldwide. The reality in many Third World countries is that the company takes the very precious resource of potable water for its processing and offers in return an elixir of decay, of absolutely no health value whatsoever, save that it is a liquid and may stave off thirst. The implied sustenance in *Medicine Bundle* is denied in its materialisation which is an ascerbic analogy of the reality of the 'real thing' claim. Hall *works* the materials and concepts underpinning *Medicine Bundle* intensively to "articulate histories, subjects and sensory knowledges against the grain."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Meskimmon, *Op.cit.*, p.4

FIONA HALL'S WORK WITHIN A POSTCOLONIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Hall clearly identifies herself as a postcolonial artist. Her very European intellectual lineage and references in her works throughout the 1980s and early 1990s itself undergoes scrutiny in the light of postcolonial, cross-cultural and ecological issues that emerge as political forces in the 1980s and 1990s. Her comment to a Sri Lankan interviewer in 2002 that her “sensitivity as an Australian artist is very non European” is revealing in terms of her duality of identification: as an Australian and as a non European.⁴⁹ She clearly expands her sense of place to include different cultures and countries in Asia that share a similar colonial history to Australia's.

Hall's explorations of postcolonial and ecological concepts branch into two related yet distinct areas of historical concern in her work. The first category considers Australia's diminishing ecological diversity since European settlement and acknowledges the marginalisation of Aboriginal people and their knowledge systems through by retrieving Aboriginal naming systems for native plants. The second category concerns Australia's European colonial history that is shared with a number of South-east Asian countries. Hall negotiates the complex web of equivalences and contradictions that link culturally disparate yet geographically close countries using trade in commercially viable botanical species as her theme. In Hall's scheme, the postcolonial reality is intimately linked with ecological concerns and this linkage becomes further evident through her use of botanical and domestic matrices. Nevertheless, an over-arching theme which connects all of her work within this framework is the dialectic of memory and loss and its subset, the retrieval of forgotten, rejected or marginalised knowledge systems; the stuff of other histories that occur outside the linear and heroic colonialist project (whether that project is 19th century European nation states or 20th century global corporations).

Photography as a medium came into its own in the 19th century as an important contributor to the colonial apparatus, a mode of reporting back an alienated vision, informed by the needs and desires of the coloniser, presenting views that confirmed the already known master narrative of conquest. Perhaps it was this history and the need to intervene and engage more directly with the viewer that 'outed' Hall from the prescribed photographic viewpoint into the direct, felt experience of her hybrid, sculpted forms.

⁴⁹ Chitra Weerasinghe, “Lanka the garden of Eden – Fiona Hall”, *Sunday Observer* (Sri Lanka), 1 September, 2002. Accessed 1 March, 2004, <<http://origin.sundayobserver.lk/2002/09/01/fea13.html>>

Within the first category of diminishing ecological diversity and the marginalised Aboriginal landscape of plant names, the works that will be discussed within a postcolonial and ecological framework are: *Karra-wari (Pitjantjatjara)*, *Eucalyptus microtheca*, *coolibah tree*, 1999; *Atnyem (Alyawar)*, *Acacia kempeana*, *witchetty bush*, 1999; *Dumban (Bundajalung)*, *Platycerium superbum*, *staghorn*, 1999 from the *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled* series. This series of fifteen works, created in 1996, are part of the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria and *Fern Garden* 1998 is her commissioned landscape garden at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra.

Paradisus Terrestris Entitled

In an interview, Hall reveals her intention in *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled* 1996:

“It is amazing to me that a section of the Australian population still can’t comprehend that this land and the plants that grow in it, and the people whose land that originally was, have together a very long history of coexistence that must be acknowledged and respected. The recent work, *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled*, attempts to make a point about this. The multiple parallel systems of plant names seem to me to eloquently indicate widely different outlooks and levels of awareness.”⁵⁰

Hall’s interest in systems of classification, taxonomies and hierarchies is evident in these works. As in the original *Paradisus Terrestris* series of works examined in the previous section of this chapter, Hall again employs her signature matrix of botanical references, in this case, native Australian flora, and the domestic, using the physical divide of the sardine tin to signify her subversive inversion of human and floral motifs. Added to this is a triple naming system that incorporates a variety of Aboriginal languages and their naming systems for plants, with the Linnaean binominal term followed by the common usage, English name.

Naming takes on whole new meaning in this series of works by the simple expedient of including Aboriginal plant names and the Aboriginal languages these arise from. As Paul Carter states “spatial history- history that discovers and explores the lacuna left by imperial history – begins and ends in language”.⁵¹ Naming, whether using the Linnaean or the common English terms, implies a universalising “museum-like

⁵⁰ Hart, *Op.cit.*, p.206

⁵¹ Paul Carter, *Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, Faber and Faber, London, 1987, p.xxiii

discourse of a culture”, and thus, the specific, local Aboriginal languages and their naming systems “could have no epistemological place: they were not typical, obeyed no known rules, conveyed no useful facts”.⁵² Ignored, pushed to the periphery and in some cases to extinction, Aboriginal naming systems were flattened under the weight and authority of the coloniser’s Cartesian grid of taxonomy. Hall’s retrieval of fragments of Aboriginal names for native plants, is an attempt to acknowledge the spatial history that Carter describes. Here she moves to another level of “cultural archaeology”, subverting the disciplines, epistemologies and infrastructure of imperialism, in order to undertake “an interpretative and imaginative...restoration of meaning.”⁵³

The three works from the *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled* series that will be considered within a postcolonial and ecological framework were completed in 1999 and are from a later group of work than the first fifteen works completed in 1996 and in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria. Within this later group, the works that will be examined are: *Karra-wari (Pitjantjatjara), Eucalyptus microtheca, coolibah tree; Atnyem (Alyawar), Acacia kempeana, witchetty bush* and, *Dumban (Bundajalung), Platycerium superbum, staghorn*. Hall extended the rationale for the initial project into *Fern Garden* 1998, her commissioned landscape garden for the National Gallery of Australia.

***Karra-wari (Pitjantjatjara), Eucalyptus microtheca, coolibah tree* 1999
(Plate 27)**

This is an exquisite, botanically detailed rendering of this tree of life, so called because coolibah trees indicated the presence of water holes. The strong and supple trunk of this desert marker of water sources, so essential for life, is mirrored in the supple and youthful, male trunk below in the sardine can. Unlike many of the works in the original and current series, this is not a picture of sexual arousal, rather it is an acknowledgement of rejuvenation and strength. It implies an ability to read the landscape and recognise life-giving signs, a symbiotic relationship between man and his environment that Aboriginal tribes had established over millennia. It was this symbiosis that enabled the indigenous people to survive, in what was to English and European colonisers, an

⁵² *ibid.* p.333 and p.61

⁵³ First quote is from Timothy Morrell, “Fiona Hall”, *Art from Australia Eight Contemporary Views*, Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency, Melbourne, 1991, p.46. Second quote from Carter, *Op.cit.*, p.349

inhospitable land. The near starvation of the First Fleet in the very early days of the colony and the tragic outcomes of some of the ill-fated explorer campaigns bear testament to this cultural blindness. As Hall herself acknowledges, “We share a great deal with the plants...if we can’t coexist with and maintain the plant world then human life is doomed”.⁵⁴

Atnyem (Alyawar), Acacia kempeana, witchetty bush 1999 (Plate 28)

As the common name, witchetty bush, suggests, this hardy, desert bush is where witchetty grubs “feed and mature within the roots of these acacias.”⁵⁵ The grubs in turn provide an important food source for local Aboriginal peoples of the central desert. There is an inventive, if rather earthy, word play in this work, that can be gently teased from its brief botanical description, “a tall, glabrous shrub with sticky young foliage and golden spike-like flowers”.⁵⁶ Glabrous refers to hairless, smooth skin in this case referring to the branches. In terms of human sexual allusions, ‘glabrous’ could refer to the smooth female pubis revealed in the sardine tin and also hint at the smooth skinned phallus with its ejaculation of “sticky young foliage”. This invoked ‘implantation’ ensures a womb-like haven of food and protection for the grubs, which then become a food source for humans. Digging for grubs and collecting the nutritious seeds of the bush which could be ground into flour, was women’s business, thus a further association between the bas-relief of the female form and the provident plant form rising above the sardine can. Nature’s fecundity in the ecological food chain supports a range of interdependent life forms, if only one has the wisdom and ‘eyes’ to see and understand this complex web of life and one’s place within it.

Dumban (Bundajalung), Platycerium superbum, staghorn 1999 (Plate 29)

This work, like the plant that is so often removed from its habitat in sub-tropical forests and celebrated in Australian suburban greenhouses and railway stations, performs a decorative function that is then amplified by the accompanying English word play referring to male arousal. The flamboyantly, tumescent frilled, leaf balls of the Staghorn create their own little mirror reversal world (quite apart from the peep-hole special

⁵⁴ Hart, *Op.cit.*, p.206

⁵⁵ Les Hiddens, *Explore Wild Australia with the Bush Tucker Man*, Ken Fin Books, Collingwood, 1999, p.105

⁵⁶ Forestry Commission of Australia, *Trees and Shrubs of Eastern Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, 1980, p.47

awaiting in the can). In the epiphytic world, these highly specialised ferns form their own self-contained nutrient system with the sterile or upward thrusting outer leaves providing a leaf litter and water collecting device and the sexualised downward thrusting leaves containing the reproductive spores, expanding the base of the fern. The fertile leaves bear very close resemblance to male reindeer horns and the words ‘stag’ and ‘horn’ have particular colloquial associations with penile arousal. These colloquial expressions are literally mirrored in the copulative act below, with the resultant exuberant flowering mirrored above in the frilled head. Like the adaptive sardine can, which facilitated so much and was such a convenient colonial export, the ancient epiphytic staghorn, was an easily adapted showpiece, not only in Australian gardens and railway stations but also in colonial botanic gardens.

Hall’s first *Fern Garden* is closely related to the triple, taxonomic concerns of *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled* series and introduces Hall’s broader ecological concerns in relation to Australia’s unique floral heritage, much of which is under threat and which, as a nation, we are only just beginning to appreciate and understand. The design of this work critiques the imperialist project of establishing botanic gardens in each colony for the purposes of enhancing Britain’s trade and economy as a “standard symbol of colonial conquest”, yet in true Hall fashion, this very critique provides the basis on which to restore neglected systems of knowledge and to remember and contemplate absences.⁵⁷ As Hall herself acknowledges, “What might be seen as distinctly different methodologies actually come from the same conceptual base”.⁵⁸

Her increasing ecological concern for Australia’s unique and diminishing biodiversity was fed by her introduction to Mary White’s books, *The Greening of Gondwana* and *The Nature of Hidden Worlds* published in 1984 and 1990 respectively and Tim Flannery’s book, *The Future Eaters: An ecological history of the Australasian lands and people*, published in 1994.⁵⁹ These represented a departure from European literary texts as her primary intellectual and conceptual sources for her artworks and a return to specificity of place, Australia, and its relations within the South-east Asian region. As the good,

⁵⁷ Patricia Fara, *Sex, Botany and Empire: The Story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks*, Icon Books, Cambridge, 2003, p.140

⁵⁸ Timothy Morrell, “Fiona Hall interviewed, Adelaide September 1999” in Sunhanya Raffel, *A transit through paradise*, Asialink Centre, University of Melbourne, 1999, p.11

⁵⁹ Hart, *Op.cit.*, p.209

ecological gardener that she is, everything, including her European intellectual and philosophical foundations, was put to good use in this investigation that has marked much of her major work since the early 1990s.

***Fern Garden* 1998 (Plate 30)**

“I am reminded of that phrase: ‘the map is not the territory’”⁶⁰

Fiona Hall’s *Fern Garden* reclaims a difficult space within the modernist concrete architecture of the National Gallery of Australia. This work is both a meditation on death, loss and memory and a celebration of regeneration. It is underpinned, theoretically, by postcolonial and feminist concerns of retrieval from the margins and reclamation of place. This commission marked another transition for Hall, as she moved from creating archetypal gardens out of domestic waste and recycled materials, to working with live plants in an architectural space. Hall has used the formal elements of traditional garden design to create a private world in a public space that invites meditation, reflection and renewal. As she observed: “*Fern Garden* should be regarded in the sphere of garden design and landscape architecture, rather than as a public art work or ‘land art’.”

The site, which Hall selected, posed its own challenges. It was a dank, shaded space, framed and enclosed by the precipitous concrete cliffs of the building and subject to extremes of climate. Any hope of a garden surviving such forbidding conditions required a detailed knowledge of suitable native flora. Hall’s selection of an ancient tree fern, *Dicksonia antarctica*, which dates back to the time of Gondwana, when the Australian land mass was still connected to South America and Antarctica, reverberates on a number of levels. This species was well established along the east coast of Australia in wet sclerophyll forests, much of which were cleared for grazing sheep and cattle during the 19th and 20th centuries. These ferns provided an important source of starch for Aboriginal people as well as supporting delicate ecosystems of epiphytic ferns and orchids.⁶¹ The species is now restricted to small pockets of uncleared land, much of it in National Parks. It also grows well in ornamental gardens. Hall’s garden critiques the large-scale land clearing initiated by the colonisers, that resulted in the loss and

⁶⁰ *ibid.* p.208

⁶¹ Molly Hicks, “*Dicksonia antarctica* – the soft tree fern”, Australian National Botanic Gardens www.anbg.gov.au/gnp/interns-2003/dicksonia-antarctica.html accessed 29 October 2004

destruction of species, plant, animal and human, through the inclusion of nine Aboriginal names (with the relevant language groups) for *Dicksonia antarctica*, inscribed in granite pavers (like gravestones) along the circular pathways. Her selection of Aboriginal names also acknowledges the decimation of Aboriginal knowledge and the appropriation of Australian flora by European science through the process of naming within Linnaean taxonomy. This very act suppressed not only the local identity of the plants but also their history of uses and ecological relationships known to Aboriginal people.⁶² European naming denied any acknowledgment of prior use, cultivation of or engagement with, the environment as exemplified the use of the legal doctrine 'terra nullius' which literally means nobodies' land. As Wally Caruana has noted, "it is by the acquisition of knowledge, not material possessions, that one attains status in Aboriginal culture".⁶³ The very act of Cartesian mapping overlaid with European place names, obliterated "the intricate web of Aboriginal Dreamings", that fundamental basis for Aboriginal relationship to land.⁶⁴ It is this denial of Aboriginal identity and systems of knowledge, that Hall challenges through her inclusion of Aboriginal names and languages for the major fern species.

In keeping with the memento mori theme, the garden is dedicated to three women who died tragically. There are two named granite seats and, at the entrance, a pebbled inscription for the third woman, all reminiscent of memorial gardens. A third seat is dedicated to the very much alive, Aboriginal artist, Destiny Deacon, a friend of Hall's who jokingly insisted that she wanted "a chair like Mrs Macquarie".⁶⁵ This proved to be a wonderfully ironic and prescient request as Hall was later commissioned to create a folly at the site of Mrs Macquarie's Chair in Sydney, as part of the Sydney Sculpture Walk program.

The regenerative aspect is self-evident in its being a thriving, living garden, a 'natural' grotto. The ferns have already begun to throw their verdant shade over the area and epiphytic orchids can be seen encircling the fern trunks. The memento mori aspect is seamlessly enfolded within the spiral formation of the paths which mimics the

⁶² Fara, *Op.cit.*, p.73

⁶³ Wally Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1993, p.14

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p.10

⁶⁵ Hart, *Op.cit.* p.210

unfolding of a young fern frond, and is also an ancient symbol of infinity and renewal. The spiral paths lead to the recessed central pond and fountain, 'the waters of life', which links the underworld of death with the renewal of life's energy. Entrance to the garden is through a wrought iron gate, symbolic of the cycle of regeneration in its elegant and cryptic representation of the human female reproductive system.

Ten years on, *Fern Garden* is perhaps a fitting response to *The Aboriginal Memorial*, that most outstanding installation of two hundred burial poles, originally commissioned for the Biennale of Sydney and presented to the Gallery in 1988 to mark the two hundredth anniversary of European settlement in Australia. It is one of the most powerful artworks and postcolonial statements ever created in Australia: a war memorial for the disappeared and the dispossessed. Yet, "it speaks of life, continuity, and a new beginning".⁶⁶ Hall's garden of remembrance and reflection is based on the spiral, symbol of renewal and infinity. Her incorporation of Aboriginal botanical taxonomies is an attempt to peel back the mapped Cartesian blanket to reveal the intricate web of Aboriginal knowledge, rendered invisible to European colonists, that was already here, in place. The map is definitely not the territory.

Within the second category of works to be considered within a postcolonial and ecological framework are those relating to trade in botanical specimens specifically *Cash Crop* 1998-99 and, those works concerned with impending ecological catastrophe, such as *Dead in the water* 1999 and *Drift Net* 1999. These works are from the *Fieldwork* series. In works such as these and Hall's later series, *Leaf Litter*, consumerism and its ecological and economic consequences, are upturned and dissected.

These works reveal a wonderful, slippery dichotomy, between a child's wonder at the vast and orderly array of specimens within museums of natural history and a critique of the underlying imperialist rationale of collecting and naming specimens from the exotic colonies in order to possess them within a formal European taxonomy, and eventually to commercialise them, as in the case of *Cash Crop*. The effects of rampant commercialisation, market forces and unsustainable farming and harvesting practices on the natural environment are the focus of *Dead in the Water* and *Drift Net*. These two works are inverted commentaries on the collision of systems of nature and culture as a result of gross imbalance. As Hall supports the Linnaean proposition that human beings

⁶⁶ Caruana, *Op.cit.*, p.206

are part of the natural world and not separate from it, then this very interdependence renders both systems fragile, when subjected to unsustainable levels of imbalance.

Cash Crop 1998-99 (Plate 31)

“...Perhaps the ongoing exploration, the systematic working through of ideas and reaching out for different approaches and so on is the epic voyage. Maybe it’s a soap opera. I quite like that term actually. Often it does seem like a soap opera, where you’ve got all of these different characters, ideas and media that crop up again and again, and which go through different phases...”⁶⁷

The perishable fruits, nuts and vegetables; the commodities that can be traded between colonies or through global corporations, are lovingly moulded from soap, a more sensuous material to handle than the razor sharp metal of tin and aluminium of her earlier series of work. The specimens are presented museologically, ordered according to size from the top shelf downwards, labelled with a triple nomenclature and embalmed within the pyramidal glass vitrine, preserved from the natural rot and decay of living things. The base of the vitrine is covered in various national currencies’ bank notes.⁶⁸ The move from the theatrical exuberance of her ‘soap opera’ (in the above quote) to the hypertrophied garden in a sterile museum display case is part of Hall’s process of zeroing in on her subject. She approaches her subject with the precision of a coroner at an autopsy.

Trade and the usually unequal distribution of wealth generated by this exchange is the theme in this work, whether it involved the trade routes which predated European explorations, the aggressive European colonial trade wars or onwards to the globalised trading of current multi-national corporations. Specifically, it is a botanical economy that Hall is exposing. All of the specimens, so lovingly carved in soap, are grown commercially, often far from their original place of origin. Her triple naming of each specimen reveals Hall’s biting irony in paralleling the two systems of botany and commerce. The principal name given for each specimen is a market economy term followed by the actual Linnaean plant classification and finally, its common name in English. This metaphorical hierarchy proclaims that the most important system is economic value. Some of the links are genuinely cheeky. Okra, *Abelmoschus esculentus*,

⁶⁷ Timothy Morrell and Jim Moss, “Fiona Hall”, *Photofile*, Vol. 6 No. 2 Summer 1988, p.27

⁶⁸ These bank notes later evolved into their own series, becoming the ongoing *Leaf Litter* project.

a small West African vegetable used throughout Greece, Turkey and the Middle East, which cooks down to a lovely slimy mush is trumpeted as the *Share Market Slump*; the Peanut, *Arachis hypogaea*, an important cash crop which produces the second largest source of vegetable oil in the world, is relegated to the *Tax Return* (not a great earner); and the Lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*, rises to the top as *Share Market Float*.⁶⁹ The floating lotus blossom is purely decorative, it is the root that is the source of food and nutrition, and it draws its nutrients from the slime at the bottom of the pond. Unlike Hall's literal above and below the line inversions in *Dead in the Water* and *Drift Net*, it is her word play that carries the ironic inversion in this work.

Touch, communicating felt experience, is acknowledged in her use of soap as a modelling medium; as Hall notes it has the "tactility and sensuality of human skin".⁷⁰ The movement from the theatrical exuberance of her 'soap opera' to the hypertrophied soap garden in a museum display case is all part of Hall's mirror reversal strategy that allows seemingly disparate elements and themes to collide; they go off like random depth charges in the viewer. These fragrant simulacra defy the rot and decay of real produce; they will not despoil their pristine museum setting. In sentiment, this work has very direct links to *Medicine bundles for the non-born child* reminding us of the lost potency of the original cocoa and cola leaves, displaced by a more powerful, unhealthy, synthetic global elixir.

Cash Crop resonates with a critique of the colonial pursuit of creating a trading economy beneficial to the coloniser. Sir Joseph Banks wrote of his hopes that Australia would provide "objects both in the vegetable and mineral kingdom hitherto undiscovered, that will, when brought forward, become objects of national importance and lay the foundation of a trade beneficial to the mother country with that hitherto unproductive colony"; his emphasis of who should benefit is unequivocal.⁷¹

Banks's statement reinforces the intention behind title of this work, 'cash crop'. In the present context, 'mother country' can be extrapolated to encompass multi-national corporations, whose operations fuel the major stock markets worldwide. The economic

⁶⁹ Henry Hobhouse and Sandra Knapp, "Seeds of Trade", Natural History Museum, <http://intern.nhm.ac.uk/jdsm/seeds> accessed 10 November 2004.

⁷⁰ Craig Judd, "Artist Commentary, Fiona Hall", *12th Biennale of Sydney* www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/biennale2000/pdf/fionahall/.PDF accessed 30 May 2004

⁷¹ quoted in R. Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens*, Harvill Press, London, 1995, p.123 in Fara, *Op.cit.*, p.151

power of these companies, like their colonial predecessors, over-rides a country's or community's previous trading relationships and production for sustenance. Arable land is taken over for industrial, plantation cropping, often usually with species that are not native to the region. The inequities that Hall alludes to in *Cash Crop* include exploitation of land and people in the production of raw materials destined for an export market where the cash received by the grower (and further down the chain, the workers) for the raw material crop is small relative to the profits made further up the supply chain, and in no way compensates for any ecological or social damage that may result from this enterprise.

One of the specimens in Hall's vitrine is a stick of sugar cane, a non-native plant to Australia and the basis of a major export industry. The pesticides and fertilisers needed to support this industry, which pollute river and coastal run-off are now known to be responsible for the destruction of coral reef systems in the Great Barrier Reef. *Cash Crop* folds back into, and is inseparable from, *Dead in the water*.

***Dead in the water* 1999 (Plate 32)**

“Even feared and hated objects excite pleasure when mimicked on a small scale”⁷²

Hall's conflation of lacework and petit point with sewerage pipes in *Dead in the water* 1999, is a collision of the absurd and a reversal of the natural order. Her exquisite lace-work plumbing pipes can be read as an eloquent exposé of algal blooms in critical water systems in Australia, notably for the city of Adelaide where Hall lives. Hers is an apposite analogy - beautifully decorated plumbing pipes pierced to the point of uselessness allude to the water-weed that covers a dead river system and emits a foul, anaerobic smell. It is this stench that exposes the true state of the water system; thoroughly poisonous to humans and other organisms and, completely of our own making.

It is the deadly seduction of ignorance and greed that Hall satirises in this work. She uses the domestic crafts of lace work and beading, signs of a private, polite world to expose the hidden, excremental outflows of economic efficiencies and their putrid consequences. Beneath the waterline are beautifully beaded, organic shapes reminiscent

⁷² Stanley Hall cited in Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collector*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1993, p.112 in Juliana Engberg, “The Colonial Corridor”, *Colonial Post Colonial*, Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne, 1996, p.20.

of tree stumps and underwater weed, which in a healthy ecosystem, would provide food for fish, birds and micro-organisms and breeding shelters for fish as well as much needed oxygen to refresh and regenerate the system. However, this is a watery grave of fetid stumps and straggling, bloated roots. It is rotten to the core, an indictment of the mismanagement of critical water resources in the world's driest continent.

Hall has said in a past interview that this work "is trying to bring to the surface the issues of underwater pollution and the death of our coral reefs, a hidden but appalling environmental disaster."⁷³ The specific threat to Australia's Great Barrier Reef comes from the run-off from the commercial sugar farms in North Queensland. Sugar cane is not a plant native to Australia but, like tea and cotton, was one of the earliest imperial crops which relied on and sustained the slave trade. More important than the commercial exploitation of the crop for imperial consumption was the appalling human exploitation. Now, it is the environment that is being exploited in the name of commercial export markets for sugar. The natural order is reversed: leaky effluent pipes which discharge the phosphate and pesticide run-off into the rivers and sea are exposed in their white-bone decay above the water line and below, the bleached white stumps of dead coral beds, in their beautifully beaded and useless forms, reveal the extent of the disaster. Removed to the pristine and orderly placement within a museological vitrine one is reminded of the childlike fascination and horror elicited by viewing those formaldehyde abortions of the abnormal in museums of natural history or medicine. This work acts as a warning of mankind's, and particularly Australia's, aborting of its own future and as a mutant memorial. Hall, through her modelled miniatures, creates an imagined, alternate system that allows complex and conflicting interpretations to co-exist without suppressing each others' characteristics. In Hall's estimation, we have bartered our own survival, as seen by the destruction of major river systems or coral

⁷³ Timothy Morrell, "Fiona Hall interviewed, Adelaide September 1999" in Sunhanya Raffel, *A transit through paradise*, Asialink Centre, University of Melbourne, 1999, p.10

reefs, for the glitter of white refined sugar (symbol of consumerist excess and decay) and, in exchange, we are left with graveyards of coral and tree-root skeletons; an iniquitous exchange.

***Drift Net* 1998 (Plate 33)**

The third work in the *Fieldwork* trilogy has a close association with an earlier work, *Incontinent* 1997, in the Parliament House Collection, Canberra. Queen Victoria's gin bottle turns up in *Drift Net* carrying a message of fragile hope as it stands stranded on the glass littoral of the vitrine along with a bleached white coral carcass. An elaborate "S" bend of lace-worked sewer pipes, like a sandworm casing, drains away the water in the tank leaving everything above the littoral line, high and dry. As in *Dead in the Water*, Hall has replaced her botanical matrix with a zoological one. Her above and below inversion is the literal divide of the glass 'littoral' in the vitrine. Memory and loss are evident in this eulogy to waste and extinction.

The title refers to enormous nets set adrift to catch migrating fish species such as tuna. These nets, which are illegal in many countries, catch everything in their swathe including dolphins, turtles, other fish species, seaweed and detritus. The wastage is devastating to marine ecology, with everything except the targeted catch species, thrown back into the sea to be either eaten by predators or washed up on the shoreline. Hall's lacy sewer works cum sandworm casing, expose the lie behind the bland euphemism of 'collateral damage' or 'side catch' of such illegal and unsustainable operations. Hall's message in a bottle is a cry for help. It too is analogous to the rubbish dumped at sea which places further strain on the environment. Within each of the works investigated in this section, Hall constantly emphasises the Linnaean principle, that the human

⁷⁴ Quote from Fiona Hall in *Leaf Litter: an exhibition by Fiona Hall: 16 – 28 August 2002 at the Australian High Commission, Colombo, Sri Lanka*, Lunuganga Trust in association with Asialink, Melbourne, 2002, np.

species is part of nature, not a separate form of creation, and that our survival is dependent upon our recognition of this interdependence. As Hall herself has said: “everything comes at a price and now we are paying heavily for taxing the environment and for cultivating an even more widening gap between rich and poor nations”.⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

Memory and loss are key themes in the work of Fiona Hall. They permeate the intensely personal works of the 1980s through to her more political and public works from the 1990s onwards which deal with issues of ecological threat and the consequences of colonisation. Her work harnesses the anarchic forces of sensual delight and theatre to challenge meta-systems of knowledge, memory and power. Touch, the tactile quality of the domestic materials selected, are part of her vocabulary of form and process. It is her use of strategies of European systems of order, the very systems she critiques, to excavate and retrieve other systems of naming and placing, other identities and narratives, that gives her work its edgy, yet poised, balance.

Hall moved from photography to hybrid sculptural forms to create her own world, an ordered and catalogued place of wonder and beauty. Though critical of past discourses, creating her own ‘museum’ gives her the power to define new sets of questions, “unmasking...previous structures”, in the process.⁷⁵ Hall’s classical, European intellectual and visual substrate is scrutinised in the light of postcolonial, ecological and cross-cultural issues that emerged as political forces in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. It is as though Dante’s grand, moral purpose in mapping the *Inferno* has somehow been transferred to Hall. The scale and ambition of her project indicates her own attempt to visually map out a postmodern and more recently, a postcolonial mapping of a contemporary *Inferno*.

⁷⁵ Stephen Jay Gould, *Dinosaur in a Haystack*, Penguin Books, London, 1997, p.418

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This thesis establishes the changing context for Australian sculptural practice in the closing decades of the twentieth century. The period from the beginning of the 1980s through to the end of the 1990s was a time when many of the certainties of the era following World War Two came to an end. A shifting of the centre, initially away from Europe towards America, and increasingly towards the Asia Pacific and a truly globalised world, started to open large, new cracks in previously certain ground. A pluralism replaced the earlier centre and periphery discourse. Postmodernist, feminist and postcolonial discourses have offered a new framework within which to understand, and map, the new world views being formed and the consequent effects on Australia's cultural fabric. By studying the work of two substantial mid-career, women sculptors, Hilarie Mais and Fiona Hall, this thesis aims to chart the impact of these three important theoretical discourses on contemporary Australian sculptural practice from the 1980s.

Hilarie Mais has taken the grid, that reductivist symbol of American minimalism, and reinvested this powerful motif with language, by the use of contradiction and paradox, the very elements that minimalism had sought to reject. Her British artistic and intellectual background, the influence of the British constructivists and her investigations into recursive systems within which repetition leads to paradox and change were fundamental to this development. The impact of feminism with its concern for re-establishing the 'relation of experience to discourse', specifically denied by the 1960s minimalist aesthetic was also an important factor in her development.¹ For Mais, the resolution of these two powerful and radically different influences found its most receptive expression in something akin to a fugue; a meta-system of structural and conceptual complexity that incorporates many voices, many viewpoints. The distance of Australia from the 'centres' created a space where these multiple viewpoints, sometimes in conflict, at other times converging, can be seen and interpreted as a totality in her work.

¹ Susan L. Stoops, "An Introduction", *More than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70s*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1996, p.9

Memory and loss are key themes in the work of Fiona Hall. They permeate the intensely personal works of the 1980s through to her more political and public works which have from the 1990s onwards dealt increasingly with issues of ecological threat and the consequences of colonisation. Her work harnesses the anarchic forces of sensual delight and theatre to challenge meta-systems of knowledge, memory and power. Touch, the tactile quality of the domestic materials selected, is central to her vocabulary of form and process. It is her use of strategies of European systems of order, the very systems she critiques, to excavate and retrieve other systems of naming and placing, other identities and narratives, that gives her work its edgy, yet poised, balance.

Hall moved from photography to hybrid sculptural forms to create her own world, an ordered and catalogued place of wonder and beauty. Though critical of past discourses, creating her own 'museum' gave her the power to define new sets of questions, "unmasking...previous structures", in the process.² Hall's classical, European intellectual and visual substrate is scrutinised in the light of postcolonial, ecological and cross-cultural issues that emerged as political forces in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.

Within the theoretical framework of this thesis, postmodernism is a valid context within which to discuss the artworld from the 1970s through the 1980s. Both artists can be seen to be operating within a postmodernist framework. Derrida's methodology of deconstruction and the postmodernist strategies of "appropriation, site-specificity, impermanence, accumulation, discursivity, hybridisation" as outlined in Craig Owen's essay, "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism" are addressed in Fiona Hall's photographic collage works of the 1980s.³ Mais's work engages with the author discourse of Barthes and Foucault. Her emerging grid works of the late 1980s onwards, are also indicative of the proposition of the post-structuralist philosopher, Gilles Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*.

² Stephen Jay Gould, *Dinosaur in a Haystack*, Penguin Books, London, 1997, p.418

³ Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism", pp.203-235 in Brian Wallis (ed), *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1984, p.208

The influence of feminism is particularly evident in the “regendering” of sculpture that began in the art schools of the 1970s.⁴ Both Mais and Hall emerged as fully formed artists at the beginning of the 1980s following undergraduate and postgraduate study. A variety of feminist discourses inform the work of both artists. Julia Kristeva’s lament on abjection is evident in a particular body of work by Mais, dedicated to the female cycle and centred on the unrepresentable body of the mother. Hall’s incorporation of taboo female subjects and her use of craftwork traditionally associated with the feminine, her use of domestic materials and, most especially, her sense of touch, are signs of the ‘other’. Her lived, embodied experience communicated through touch in her everyday materials, echoes the concerns of the poststructuralist feminist, Judith Butler for “bodies that matter”.⁵

Postcolonial and environmental concerns are increasingly relevant to Fiona Hall’s works from the 1990s onwards. Hall’s inclusion of Aboriginal names for native Australian botanical species in two, important series of works, expands upon Paul Carter’s postcolonial proposition of spatial history, that “lacuna left by imperial history” which “begins and ends in language”.⁶ Her latest works address postcolonial concerns shared with the sub-continent countries of India and Sri Lanka using the metaphor of economic botany and its ecological consequences.

Specific concepts within the three discourses, relevant to particular bodies of work for each artist, have been covered in the monographic studies. The trajectories of the sculptors, Mais and Hall, and their works, in many ways reflect the changes and opportunities offered by the shifting certainties and redefined faultlines in the Australian political and cultural landscape in the final decades of the twentieth century. The thesis demonstrates the diversity and vitality of an emerging sculptural practice in Australia where issues of feminism, postcolonial discourse and environmental concerns are presented within a postmodernist context.

⁴ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000, p.357

⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’*, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, p.32 quoted in Marsha Meskimmon, *Women making art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*, Routledge, London, 2003, p.94

⁶ Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, Faber and Faber, London, 1987, p.xxiii

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- Thompson, Judith, *Skangarooovian funk :peculiar Adelaide ceramics 1968-1978*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1986.
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Hilarie Mais

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

Selected chronologies and bibliographies

FIONA HALL

1953 Born Sydney, N.S.W. Lives and works in Adelaide, S.A.

Education

1972-5 Painting Diploma, National Art School, Sydney

1977-8 Photographic Assistant to Fay Godwin, London

1979-82 Master of Fine Arts (Photography), Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, New York

1981 Artist in Residence, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania, Hobart

1983- Lecturer in Photostudies, South Australian School of Art,

present University of South Australia, Adelaide

1990 Artist in Residence: Philip Institute of Technology, Preston, Victoria

1997 Creative Arts Fellow, Australian National University, Canberra

Artist in Residence, Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens, Brisbane

1999 Asialink Lunugunga Residency, Sri Lanka

Selected Individual Exhibitions

1981 *Recent Works*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

The Antipodean Suite, Tasmanian School of Art Gallery, Hobart

1982 Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

1983 *Fiona Hall, Recent Work*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

Fiona Hall, Recent Photographs, The Developed Image, Adelaide; Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney; Visibility Gallery, Melbourne

1986 *II III II: A Survey of Twelve Years Work*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

1987 *Selections from 14 Years Fiona Hall*, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide

1989 *Illustration to Dante's "Divine Comedy"*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide

- 1990 *Fiona Hall, Words*, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide and Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
- 1994 *Garden of Earthly Delights*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; National Gallery of Victoria Melbourne; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart; Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; Brisbane City Hall, Brisbane
- 1995 *The Price is Right*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 1996 *Call of Nature, Lana H. Foil*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 1997 Canberra School of Art, Canberra
- 1998 *Global Liquidity* (with Nalini Malani), Gallery Chemould, Bombay, India, and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- Cash Crop*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
- 1999 *Fieldwork*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- A Transit through Paradise*, Gallery 706, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2002 *Cell Culture and Leaf Litter*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1974 *Thoughts and Images: An Exploratory Exhibition of Australian Student Photography*, Ewing and George Paton Galleries, Melbourne
- 1975 *Six Australian Woman Photographers*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- 1976 Galeria Photographica Nadar, Pisa, Italy
- 1977 Creative Camera Gallery, London, England
- 1978 *Eternal Present*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Travelling Exhibition
Church Street Photographic Centre, Melbourne
- 1980 *Fiona Hall, David Blount, Brian Thompson*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
- 1981 Australian Perspecta, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Fifteen Australian Photographers*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
- Project 38: Re-constructed Vision: Contemporary work with photography*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- By Arrangement*, DBR Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio, United States
- 1982 *Vision in Disbelief*, 4th Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Contemporary Colour Photography*, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery, New South Wales

- New American Photographs*, California State College, San Bernardo, California
- 1983 *CSR Photography Project*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
A Decade of Australian Photography, Australian National Gallery, Canberra
- 1984 *Time Present and Time Past*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
Interface: A Survey of Art and Technology, Centre Gallery, Adelaide
- 1985 *Gods, Demi-Gods and Demi-demi Gods, The Developed Image*, Adelaide
The Renegotiated Image: Excerpts from Perspecta, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide
Four Photographers, Photographers Gallery, Melbourne
In Full View. An Exhibition of 20 x 24 Polaroid Photographs, Art Gallery of New South Wales; Australian States Itinerary
South Australian Photographers, Artists Space, Melbourne
National Photographic Exhibition, Albury Regional Art Centre, Victoria
Laughter in the Dark: Australian Perspecta, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Common Ground/ Personal I, Adelaide Arts Centre, Adelaide
Light, Union Gallery, Adelaide
- 1987 *The Gothic, Perversity and its Pleasure*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane; Melbourne
Constructed Images: Photographs of Parliament House, The Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra
What is The Thing Called Science? Melbourne University Gallery, Melbourne
Pure Invention, Parco Space 5, Tokyo Japan; Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide; 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne, Victoria
Some Provincial Myths, Recent Art from Adelaide, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide; Australian States tour
- 1988 *South Australia Rephotographed*, College Gallery, South Australian School of Art, Adelaide
Recent South Australian Art: New Acquisitions, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Australian Photography 1928-1988, Garry Anderson Gallery, Sydney
Australian Photography: the 1980's, Australian National Gallery, Canberra; Australian States Itinerary

- 1989 *From the Sublime to the Sordid*, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide
- 1990 *Harbour Hymns, City Songs*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
 Art Contemporain Australien, Noumea, New Caledonia
- Photography: Recent Acquisitions*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra
- Fragmentation and Fabrication: Recent Australian Photography*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
- Terminal Garden*, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide
- Twenty Contemporary Australian Photographers*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Art from Australia. Eight Contemporary Views*, Bangkok, Jakarta, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, VACB & Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra
- 1991 *Photodeath*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra
- The Corporeal Body*, Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, Canberra
- Australian Perspecta, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Stranger than Fiction*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra
- Second Nature*, P3 Art and Environment, Tokyo, Japan
- 1992 Adelaide Festival Artists' Projects, Festival Centre, Adelaide
- The Temple of Flora*, Waverley City Gallery, Melbourne
- 1993 *Dante in Australia*, Dante Centre, Ravenna, Italy
- 1994 *Biodata*, Adelaide Installations, Adelaide Festival
- Fania*, University of South Australia Art Museum
- Localities of Desire*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
- Sydney Photographed*, Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney
- 1995 *The Object of Existence*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
- 1996 *The Power To Move; Aspects of Australian Photography*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, February
- 96 Containers*, Adelaide Festival of the Arts, Adelaide, March
- Death*, Lewers Bequest and Penrith Regional Art Gallery, April
- How Say You*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
- Inheritance*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, March

- Colonial/Post Colonial*, Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne,
Container 96 - Art Across Oceans, Copenhagen, May
 Asia Pacific Triennale, Queensland Art Gallery, Sept '96-Jan '97
Photography is Dead! Long Live Photography! Museum of Contemporary Art
 Art Cologne Internationaler Kunstmarkt, Koln Messe, November
 Art Rage 96, compilation for ABC TV video (collaboration with Destiny
 Deacon), January
- 1997 *Contemporas*, National Gallery of Victoria (Winner inaugural *Contemporas*
 5 Art Award)
The Enigmatic Object, Art Gallery of New South Wales
Perspecta, Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Group Show, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Archives and the Everyday, ANU Canberra School of Art Gallery
- 1998 *Every Other Day*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 1999 *Signature Works*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
 Clemenger Art Award, Museum of Modern Art, Heide, Melbourne
Tensions, Griffith Artworks, Griffith University, Queensland, Tasmanian
 Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
- 2000 Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales
Terra Mirabilis/Wonderful Land, Centre for Visual Arts, Cardiff, Wales
Chemistry: Art in South Australia 1990-2000, Art Gallery of South Australia,
 Adelaide
Mirror with a Memory: A History of the Photographic Portrait in Australia,
 National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
All Stars 2000, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
 The Sydney Sculpture Walk, Mrs Macquarie's Chair, Sydney
New Republics: Contemporary Art from Australia, Canada and South Africa,
 Canada House Gallery, London; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art,
 Melbourne; Canberra School of Art; University of South Australia Art
 Museum, Adelaide; Perth Institute of Contemporary Art
- 2000-1 *Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*, National Gallery of
 Australia, Canberra
- 2001 *Unpacking Europe*, Haus de Kulturen de Welt, Berlin, Germany
 Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

- Desire*, RMIT Gallery, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne
- The Art of Transformation*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- 2002 *Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968 - 2002*, National Gallery of Victoria, Federation Square, Melbourne
- Lure of the Southern Seas: the Voyages of Dumont D'Urville 1826 - 1840*, Museum of Sydney, Sydney
- 2nd Sight Australian Photography in the National Gallery of Victoria*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2002
- Sculpture by the Sea*, exh. cat., Bondi 2002
- The Dirty Dozen*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- The First Twenty Years*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- Converge: where art + science meet*, 2002 Adelaide Biennial, Art Gallery of South Australia
- 2003 *Face Up: Contemporary Art from Australia*, Museum for the Present, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin
- Tree Time*, Museum De Zonnehof, The Netherlands
- Nature and Nation: Vaster than Empires*, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, Hastings Borough, UK
- Flagship: Australian Art in the National Gallery of Victoria,
- 1790 - 2000*, The Ian Potter Centre, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- 2004 *Living Together is Easy*, Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito, Mito Arts Foundation, Mito-shi, Japan and Ian Potter Centre:NGV, Melbourne

Selected Collections

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bendigo Art Gallery

La Trobe Regional Art Gallery

Commissions

- 1983 CSR Photographic Project
- 1984-6 Parliament House Construction Project
- 1985 *In Full View*, Polaroid 20 x 24 Camera Project
- 1987-8 South Australia Rephotographed Polaroid 20 x 24 Commission, New York
- 1989 Polaroid 20 x 24 Commission, New York Residency at VACB
Green Street Studio, New York
- 1995 *Occupied Territory*, Commission for the opening of the Museum of Sydney
- 1998 *Fern Garden*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- 1999 SOCOG Olympic Limited Edition Print and Poster Commission
- 2000 *Folly for Mrs Macquarie*, Sydney Sculpture Walk, Botanic Gardens

Selected Bibliography

- 1978 *Creative Camera Yearbook*
- 1979 James Mollison (ed), *Australian Photographers: The Philip Morris Collection*, Philip Morris, Melbourne
Light and Vision
- 1980 Christine Godden, "Photography in the Australian Art Scene", *Art and Australia* Vol.18 No. 2
- 1981 Gael Newton, catalogue essay, *Australian Perspectives* (ex.cat), Art Gallery of New South Wales
- 1982 Nick Waterlow, "Australian Perspectives 1981 – a Biennial Survey of Contemporary Australian Art", *Australian Art Review*, Sydney
Scott Ward, *New American Photographs* (ex.cat), California State College, San Bernardino, California, USA
"Fiona Hall: Artist's graphic", *Photo Discourse*
- 1983 "1981 Update: A supplementary overview of artists who exhibited in the Australian Perspectives 1981", *Australian Perspectives 1983: a biennial survey of contemporary Australian art*, (ex.cat), Art Gallery of New South Wales
- 1985 Sandra Byron, *Australian Perspectives* (ex.cat), Art Gallery of New South Wales
Alan Cruikshank, *Common Ground/ Personal I* (ex.cat), Adelaide Arts Centre, Adelaide
David Broker, "Review of Common Ground/Personal I", *Photofile* Summer

- 1986 Max Dupain, "Reivew of IIII, III, II Exhibition", *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 12
- David Broker, "Review of Gods, Demi-Gods and Demi-Demi-Gods", *Photofile*, Winter
- Mark Hinderaker, *IIII, III, II* (ex.cat), Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
- 1988 Helen Ennis, *Australian Photography: the 1980s*, Australian National Gallery, OUP, Melbourne
- Gael Newton, *Shades of Light: Photography in Australia 1839-1988*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra
- 1989 *Visual Instincts: Contemporary Australian Photographers*, Volume 2
video, Production for SBS
- 1990 Sally Couacaud, *Second Nature* (ex.cat), P3 Art, Tokyo
- 1992 Jim Logan, *Temple of Flora: Fiona Hall, Fiona Macdonald, Tim Maguire, Paul Saint*, (ex.cat), Waverley City Gallery, Melbourne
- 1994 Jonathan Holmes, "Fiona Hall: Garden of Earthly Delights,"
Contemporary Art Tasmania, issue 5, Spring/Summer
- Timothy Morrell, "Undermining the systems of the post-everything world," *Art Monthly Australia*, April
- Garden of Earthly Delights: The work of Fiona Hall* (ex.cat), National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- Kate Davidson, "Garden of Earthly Delights: The work of Fiona Hall," AGNSW, *Look* magazine, June
- Stephanie Bunbury, "From sardine tin to tiara," *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 21
- Bruce James, "Feasting on Fiona's fruits," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 13
- 1995 John McDonald, "Message in a tin can," *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 30
- John Conomos, "Occupied Territory," *Object*, January
- 1996 Christopher Chapman, "Memory is the Ghost of an Object," *Broadsheet*, Autumn
- Naomi Cass, "Soap and Glory," *Herald Sun*, August 12
- Anne Stephen, "Taking cuttings – Fiona Hall's *Paradisus Terrestris*" in Juliana Engberg (ed), *Colonial Post Colonial* (ex.cat), MOMA Heide, Melbourne

- 1997 Joanna Mendelsohn, "Lana H. Foil (Fiona Hall)," *The Australian*, March 14
- Rebecca Lancashire, "Winner at the cutting edge," *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 4
- Rebecca Cornell, "a discussion with Fiona Hall," *artonview*, Summer 1997-98
- Gael Newton, "Fiona Hall: Retro-spect Leura's Theme," in Stuart Koop (ed), *A Small History of Photography*, CCP Melbourne
- "Archives & the Everyday" catalogue, Canberra Contemporary Art Space
- Christopher Chapman, "Sculpture, snapshots", *Photofile* No.50, April
- 1998 *Global Liquidity* (ex.cat) (with Nalini Malani), Gallery Chemould, Mumbai and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- Kshama Rao, "Words on Water," *Mid-day* (Mumbai, India), January 15
- Peter Ward, "Almost earthly delights," *The Weekend Australian*, July 11
- Canberra Projects* (ex.cat), National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- Sebastian Smee, "Hall mark," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August
- "Cash Crop" catalogue, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
- Deborah Hart, "Fertile Interactions," *Art in Australia*, vol 36, no2
- Timothy Morrell, "Fiona Hall: Cash Crop," *Art Monthly Australia*, November
- Timothy Morrell, "Fiona Hall: Cash Crop," *Eyeline*, Summer 1998/99
- Heather Johnson, "Imaging the artist", *Photofile* No. 54, August
- Mark Bayly, "An excursion to the Alban Hills: a personal view of the commissioned photographs of Parliament House, Canberra", *Photofile* No. 54, August
- 1999 "Fiona Hall: A Transit Through Paradise," (ex.cat), Asialink
- "Australian artist visits Sri Lanka to participate in program," *Daily News* (Colombo), November 5
- Julie Ewington, "Cash Crop," *Artlink*, vol. 19, no. 4
- Gabriella Coslovich, "Hall of fame: artist refuses to be boxed in," *The Age*, October 26
- Sebastian Smee, "Concepts take root," Galleries, *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 5
- Andrew Frost, "Australia's 50 Most Collectable Artists," *Australian Art Collector*, Issue 7, Jan-Mar
- Clemenger Contemporary Art Award* (ex.cat), MOMA Heide in association with the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

- 2000 Jenny Tabakoff, "Getting her continental drift," *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 24
- Sarah Thomas, *Chemistry: Art in South Australia 1990-2000, The Faulding Exhibition* (ex.cat), Art Gallery of South Australia
- Biennale of Sydney 2000, catalogue
- Andrew Frost, "Australia's 50 Most Collectable Artists," *Australian Art Collector*, Issue 11, Jan - Mar
- Terra Mirabilis: Wonderful Land*, (ex.cat , Centre for Visual Arts, Cardiff, Wales
- 2001 Deborah Edwards, "Transported/ Transplanted: Fiona Hall's *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie*," *Art in Australia*, Vol.39, No.2, Dec - Feb
- Stephanie Radok, "Trade," *Artlink*, Vol. 21, No. 4, p. 48 – 53
- 2002 Jason Smith, "Fiona Hall, *Dead in the water*," *Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968 - 2002*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Victoria, Federation Square, Melbourne, p. 130, 131
- Katy Deepwell (ed), "Leaf Litter: Fiona Hall", *n.paradoxa* (UK) No. 9
- John McPhee, "City Life: De Sydney à Melbourne," *Paris Photo Magazine International*, no. 22, Septembre/Octobre 2002, p. 124 - 131
- Cynthia Troup, "'Converge' Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art 2002," *Art Gallery of South Australia, Art & Australia*, vol.40, no.2, Summer 2002, p. 240-2
- Peter Hill, "Critics Picks," *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Metro), Nov 8 - 14 2002, p. 27
- 2nd Sight Australian Photography in the National Gallery of Victoria*, (ex. Cat), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2002, p. 98
- Converge: where art + science meet*, (ex cat.), 2002 Adelaide Biennial, Art Gallery of South Australia, pp. 38, 39
- Leaf Litter: an exhibition by Fiona Hall: 16 – 28 August 2002*, Australian High Commission, Sri Lanka in association with Lunuganga Trust and Asialink Centre, University of Melbourne.
- 2003 Glenda Boriani, "artsaustralia berlin 03," *tema celeste*, (1), No.100, November/December 2003
- B.R. "Berlin: Opération séduction," *L'oeil*, Dezember 2003
- Berlino, A, "Face Up. L'arte australiana va forte," *Arte*, December 2003
- Meisner, "Weit mehr als Glasperlen und Haifische," *Mannheimer Morgen*, 29 November 2003

“Face Up: Contemporary Australian Art,” review, *Flash Art*, October 2003, vol. 36, no. 232, p. 46

Claudia Henne, “Tipp Vortrag Fiona Hall,” *RBB - Radio Kultur*, 8 October, 2003, 5.55pm

Catherine Nichols, “Interview with Fiona Hall,” *Face Up: Contemporary Art from Australia*, exhibition catalogue, Museum for the Present, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 2003, p. 93

Julie Ewington, “Fiona Hall,” *Face Up: Contemporary Art from Australia*, exhibition catalogue, Museum for the Present, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 2003, p. 94, 95

Ingeborg Hagedorn, “Australischer Kunstmonat Oktober im Berlin”, *Blattgold*, ArtsAustralia Berlin, October 2003

Julian Engberg, “Loop-back: New Australian Art to Berlin,” *Artlink*, vol. 23 no. 3, p. 24 - 29

George Alexander, “Talking to the Artists,” *LOOK*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, p. 24, 25

George Alexander, “I know what I like,” *Australian Art Collector*, issue 25, July - September, p. 70 - 73

“Fiona Hall,” *Blaze: Visual Art Writing from the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia 1990 - 2002*, CACSA, Adelaide, p. 16, 33

Stuart Koop, “Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968 – 2002”, *Broadsheet*, Vol. 32, No. 1, March, April, May, p. 8 - 11

Isobel Crombie ed., *Flagship: Australian Art in the National Gallery of Victoria, 1790 - 2000*, The Ian Potter Centre, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 67, 76

Maria Bilske, ‘Fiona Hall: 50 Most Collectable Artists,’ *Australian Art Collector*, Issue 23, January - March

Pauline Green (ed), *Building the Collection*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

2004 Karen Burns, “About Face,” *Monument*, No. 58, January 2004, pp38

Richard Grayson, “The Downside up Show,” *Broadsheet*, Vol. 32, no. 4

Artist’s Publication

1995 *Subject to Change*, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide & Piper Press Sydney, Publishers

HILARIE MAIS

1952 Born Leeds, England. Lives and works in Sydney.

Education

- 1970-71 Bradford School of Art (Foundation studies)
- 1971-74 Winchester School of Art, B.A., 1st Hons
- 1975-77 Slade School of Fine Art, London
- 1977 Slade Higher Diploma. Boise Scholar
- 1977-81 Lived and worked in New York
- 1977-78 Fellowship, New York Studio School
- 1979-80 Artist in Residence, State University of New York, Purchase, New York

Selected Individual Exhibitions

- 1977 Cuningham Ward Gallery, New York
- 1979 Cuningham Ward Gallery, New York
Madeline Carter Gallery, Boston
- 1981 Betty Cuningham Gallery, New York
- 1984 *New Friends*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 1986 Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
- 1987 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 1988 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 1989 Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
- 1990 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Hilarie Mais, Retrospective: Australian Works: 1982 - 1990, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide; and Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts, Hobart
- 1992 Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
- 1994 Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney
- 1997 Galerie Dusseldorf, Perth
Conversations, Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney
- 1998 Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne

- 2000 *Weather*, Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney
Arrivals: Olympic Harbour of Life Exhibition
 Sherman Galleries Hargrave, Sydney
- 2001 Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
- 2002 *In Side: an Exhibition in Two Parts*
 Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney
 Sherman Galleries Hargrave, Sydney
- 2004 Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
Hilarie Mais: Survey of Works 1974 -2004,
 ANU Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1974 *Seven Sculptors*, Southern Arts, Guildhall Gallery, Winchester, UK
- 1977 *Artists Choice*, Audubon Gallery, Charleston, South Carolina, USA
- 1978 *Bard Invitational*, Bard College, New York State, USA.
- 1979 *Recent Directions in Sculpture*, NYSS Gallery, New York, USA
Critics Choice, Atlantis Gallery, London, UK.
- 1984 *Australian Sculpture Now: 2nd Australian Sculpture Triennial*, National Gallery of Victoria.
- 1985 *Australian Perspecta*, Art Gallery of New South Wales.
- 1986 *Origins, Originality + Beyond: 6th Biennale of Sydney*, Art Gallery of New South Wales and Pier 2/3 Walsh Bay, Sydney.
- 1987 *Third Australian Sculpture Triennial*, National Gallery of Victoria.
- 1988 *The Smorgon Collection of Contemporary Australian Art*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne.
From the Southern Cross: Australian Biennale 1988, Art Gallery of New South Wales and Pier 2/3 and National Gallery of Victoria.
- 1990 *Strange Harmony of Contrasts*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery and Regional Tour.
 Hilarie Mais, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia; Centre for the Arts, Hobart
- 1991 *Dissonance, Frames of Reference: Aspects of Feminism and Art*, Artspace/Pier 4-5, Walsh Bay, Sydney
- 1994 *Reinventing the Grid*, Robert Lindsay Gallery, Melbourne

- The Baillieu Myer Collection of the 80s*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
- 1995 *The National Womens Art Exhibition*, Art Gallery of New South Wales.
The Loti and Victor Smorgon Gift of Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
- 1996 *Systems End: Contemporary Art in Australia*, Oxy Gallery, Osaka; Hakone Museum, Japan; Dong Ah Gallery, Seoul, Korea; Kaohsiung Museum, Taiwan.
Rites for an Anxious Spring, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Spirit and Place. Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.
- 1998 *Material Perfection: Minimalism and its Aftermath*, from the Kerry Stokes Collection, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, The University of Western Australia, Perth.
Southern Reflections, Stockholm Kulturhuset, Sweden; Konsthallen Göteborg, Sweden; Stenersen Museum, Oslo, Norway; Gallery Otso, Helsinki, Finland.
- 1999 *Home and Away: Contemporary Australian and New Zealand Art from the Chartwell Collection*, Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, NZ; Govett Brewster Art Gallery; Waikato Museum of Art and History; Manawatu Art Gallery; DPART Gallery, City Gallery, Wellington
- 2000 *Monochromes*, Queensland University Art Museum
Recent Acquisitions, Newcastle Region Art Gallery
- 2001 *A Century of Collecting 1901-2001*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, UNSW
Interiors, Object Gallery, Customs House
Laurence, Mais, Tillers, Parr, Art Chicago, Navy Pier, Chicago
- 2002 *Sublime: 25 years of the Wesfarmers Collection of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of Western Australia
Good Vibrations: The Legacy of Op Art in Australia, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Fathoming: Contemporary Australian Sculpture, Gold Coast City Art Gallery and regional galleries tour to 2004
Young, Storrier, Mais and Borgelt, Art Chicago, Navy Pier, Chicago
- 2003 *Private and Particular*, Lawrence Wilson Gallery, The University of Western Australia, Perth
Untitled: Aspects of Abstraction, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
MCA Unpacked II, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.
- 2004 *Site Unseen*, The Depot Gallery, Danks Street, Sydney

Awards

- 1973 Hampshire Art Award
- 1977 Boise Scholarship, Slade School of Fine Art, UCL London
HFC Award, Slade School of Fine Art, UCL London
New York Studio School Fellowship
- 1987 VA/CB Artist Grant
- 1993 Australia Council Fellowship
- 1994 The Blake Prize
- 1999 VISY Art Prize
- 2000 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award

Selected Collections

- National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- Slade School of Fine Art, London
- University College, London
- Liszt Foundation, New York
- Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Parliament House Art Collection, Canberra
- University of New South Wales, Sydney
- ArtBank Australia, Sydney
- National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- Wollongong City Art Gallery, Wollongong
- Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Newcastle
- Campbelltown City Art Gallery, Sydney
- Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
- Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
- ASER Sculpture Collection, Adelaide
- Monash University, Melbourne
- University of Tasmania, Hobart
- Chartwell Collection, New Plymouth, NZ
- Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
- Smorgon Contemporary Australian Collection, Melbourne
- Medibank Collection, Canberra

Shell Collection, Melbourne
 The Ian Potter Centre, National Gallery of Victoria
 IBM Collection, Sydney
 Australian Capital Equity Collection, Perth
 Deutsche Bank, Sydney
 Wesfarmers Collection, Perth
 University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba
 Visy Board Collection, South Australia
 Macquarie Bank, Sydney
 Samsung Corporation, Seoul
 Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
 Gippsland Regional Art Gallery, Sale, Victoria

Selected Bibliography

- 1977 Ellen Lubell, 'Hilarie Mais', *Arts Magazine*, New York, May
- 1978 Holland Cotter, *SoHo News*, New York
- 1979 Robert Taylor, 'Hilarie Mais', *Boston Sunday Globe*, May
- 1981 Michele Cone, *Art Express*, New York, September
- Ronald J. Onorato, 'Alice Adams/Hilarie Mais', *Art Express*, New York, September
- 1982 Stuart Morgan, 'Critics Choice at Atlantis', *Artscribe 33*, London
- Monica Petzal, *Time Out*, London
- 1984 Terence Maloon, 'A Discreet Message About Discreetness', *Sydney Morning Herald*, September
- Graeme Sturgeon, 'Hilarie Mais', *Australian Sculpture Now: 2nd Australian Sculpture Triennial*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Victoria
- 1985 Rodick Carmichael, 'Review, The 2nd Australian Sculpture Triennial', *Studio International*, London
- Ursula Prunster, Terence Maloon, 'Hilarie Mais', *Australian Perspecta*, (ex.cat), Art Gallery of New South Wales
- Maudi Palmer, "Review, The 2nd Australian Sculpture Triennial", *Art and Australia*, Vol.23 No.2
- Maggie Gilchrist, "Male Monoliths/Female Icons", *Art and Australia* Vol 23 #2.

- Terence Maloon , Arts Review, *Sydney Morning Herald*. October 26
- Elwyn Lynn, *Favourite Censors and Other Monsters*, Weekend Australian, November 27
- Maggie Gilchrist, 'Male Monoliths/Female Icons', *Art and Australia*, Vol 23 #2
- 1986 Suzanne Davies, 'Questioning Post-Modernism', *Interior Design Magazine*
- John McDonald, 'The 6th Biennale of Sydney', *Studio International*, Vol 199, 1986-87, pp. 42-44
- Bill Wright, "Hilarie Mais", *Origins Originality and Beyond :6th Biennale of Sydney*
- John McDonald, "The 6th Biennale of Sydney", *Studio International* Vol 199, 1986-87, pp. 42-44
- Bernice Murphy, *The Forbidden Object* (ex.cat)
- Terence Maloon, "Arts Review", *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 27
- 1987 Elwyn Lynn, 'Echoes of Celtic Culture in a Celebration of Life', *The Australian*, 13 May
- Bruce Adams, 'Myths Trapped on Canvas', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May
- Terence Maloon, 'OZ Art', Vogue, London
- Donald Williams, *In Our Image: The Story of Australian Art*, McGraw Hill
- Anne Berriman, "Hilarie Mais: Blurring the Edges", *Craft Australia*, Autumn
- 3rd Australian Sculpture Triennial* (ex.cat), National Gallery of Victoria
- Nicholas Fairrie, *Voyage of Discovery: Australian Painting and Sculpture 1987* (ex.cat), Crescent Gallery, Dallas, Texas
- John McDonald, *Studio International*, London.
- 1988 Anthony Bond, 'Hilarie Mais', *From the Southern Cross*, Australian Biennale, 1988, exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales
- Anthony Bond, "Review, The 1988 Australian Biennale", *Craft Arts*, May/ July
- Elwyn Lynn, "Of the Blood Culture", *Weekend Australian*, June 4
- John McDonald, "Meditation on the Art of an Ephemeral World", *Sydney Morning Herald*, October
- Elwyn Lynn, *Domesticity and the Dangerous*, Weekend Australian, 8 October
- Mike Von Joel, "Hilarie Mais: Interview", *Artline*, London.

- Anna Johnson, "Out of the Ghetto", *Interior Design Magazine*
- Mike Von Joel, 'Hilarie Mais, Interview', *Artline*, London
- 1990 Terence Maloon, *Commitment to Abstraction: One Existent to the Other*, Craftsman House, Sydney
- Bruce Adams, *Hilarie Mais*, exhibition catalogue, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia
- Peter Hutchings, "From the Abstract to the Material", *Follow Me*, Adelaide
- Nicholas Baume, *Strange Harmony of Contrasts* (ex.cat), Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- Edmund Capon, *Medibank Collection* (ex.cat)
- Margaret Osborne, *The Adelaide Advertiser*, November 21
- Bruce Adams, *Hilarie Mais* (ex.cat), Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia and Centre for The Arts, Hobart
- 1991 Max Germaine, *A Dictionary of Women Artists of Australia*, Craftsman House
- Graeme Sturgeon, *Contemporary Australian Sculpture*, Craftsman House
- Sally Couacaud, *Frames of Reference: Aspects of Feminism and Art*, exhibition catalogue, Artspace, Sydney
- 1992 Katrina Rumley, *University of New South Wales Collection* (ex.cat), UNSW
- Christopher Heathcote, *Melbourne Age*, March 11
- Elwyn Lynn, "In the Grip of Biennale Fever", *Weekend Australian Review*, December 19-20
- 1993 Robert Berlind, 'Report from Australia', *Art in America*, 3 April
- Elwyn Lynn, *Australian Weekend Review*, 20 February
- Elwyn Lynn, "Sublimity to Ridicule", *Weekend Australian Review*, November 13
- Elwyn Lynn, *Drawing on a Feminine Force*, *Weekend Australian*, December 4-5
- Margot Osborne, *Poetics of Immanence* (ex.cat), Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney and Domain Art Projects, Adelaide
- Ann Carew, *Excalibur: Contemporary Artists and Celtic Heritage* (ex.cat)
- Andrew Christofided and Ian Grant, *Approaches to the Sublime* (ex.cat), Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney
- 1994 Suzanne Davies, 'Hilarie Mais; Interview', *Monument* No.2, March
- Victoria Lynn, 'Minimalism and its Shadows', *Art and Australia*, Vol.32 No.2

- Rachel Kent, *Reinventing the Grid*, (ex.cat), Robert Lindsay Gallery, Melbourne
- Alan McCulloch and Susan McCulloch, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, Allen & Unwin
- Sasha Grishin, *Canberra Times*, 26 February
- Anne Loxley, "Review: Poetics of Immanence", *Art Monthly Australia*, March
- Felicity Fenner, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 September.
- Zoja Bojic, *Novosti*, September
- John McDonald, "Save us from Perfection", *Sydney Weekend Herald*, 24 September.
- Elwyn Lynn, "Pleasures and Puzzles", *Weekend Australian*, 17-18 September.
- Terence Maloon and Robert Lindsay, *ICI Contemporary Collection* (ex.cat).
- Robert Lindsay, *Baillieu Myer Collection* (ex.cat), Museum of Modern Art at Heide,
- Donald Williams and Colin Simpson, *Art Now, Contemporary Art Post - 1970*, McGraw Hill, 1994
- Anne Loxley, *Hilarie Mais* (ex.cat), Sherman Goodhope, Sydney
- Robert Rooney, "How Lines of Thought Converge on the Grid", *Weekend Australian*, 22-23 October
- Sioux Garside, *Circle Line Square: Aspects of Geometry* (ex.cat), Campbelltown Bicentennial Art Gallery
- John McDonald, "Blake Pursues the Outward Signs of Spiritual Grace", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 December
- Elwyn Lynn, "Blake Apostles of Minimalism", *Weekend Australian*, 17-18 December
- 1995 Anne Loxley, *Hilarie Mais*, Art & Australia Monograph/ Craftsman House
- Donald Williams, *In Our Own Image: The Story of Australian Art*, McGraw Hill,
- Annette Larkin, *Eveolution* (ex.cat), Newcastle Region Art Gallery,
- Susan McCulloch, "Blake Prize at Blaxland Gallery", *Asian Art News*, Vol.5 No.2
- Victoria Lynn, *Women Artists in the Contemporary Collection*, Art Gallery of New South Wales
- Dr Gene Sherman and William Wright, *Windows on Australia I* (ex.cat), Sherman Galleries and Australian Embassy, Japan

- 1996 Anne Loxley, 'Hilarie Mais', *Systems End: Contemporary Art in Australia*, exhibition catalogue
- Nick Waterlow, *Spirit and Place: Art in Australia, 1861-1988*, (ex.cat), MCA, Sydney
- Takeshi Kanazawa/Tomoyo Abe, "Systems End Interview", *Fuji Television, TV Museum*,
- Robert Rooney, "Review Rites for an Anxious Spring", *Weekend Australian* 6 September
- T G McGuire, "Down Under Asia", *Asahi Evening News*, 27 June
- Toshio Shimizu, "Systems End Review", *Art AsiaPacific*, No.14
- Neilton Clarke, "Beginning of the End", *The Daily Yomiuri*, 7 June
- Australian Art Exhibition Touring Japan, The Boat (Bridge Between Osaka and Australia)*, April - June 1996
- "Sherman to Asia", *Asian Art News*, May-June
- 1997 *The Loti and Victor Smorgon Gift of Contemporary Australian Art*, exhibition catalogue, MCA, Sydney
- David Bromfield, *Weekend West Australian*, Feb.
- Bruce Adams, "Review, Spirit and Place: Art in Australia 1861 – 1988", *Art/Text*, May-July
- Giles Auty, *Weekend Australian, Review*, Oct 18-19
- Joyce Morgan, "Yen For the Big League", *Sydney Morning Herald*, Oct 31
- Nick Waterlow, Cat. *Hilarie Mais, Conversations*, Sherman Goodhope,
- 1998 John Stringer, *Material Perfection: Minimal Art and its Aftermath*, (ex.cat), Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery
- Elizabeth Cross, *Southern Reflections*, (ex.cat) AGNSW and Kulturhuset, Stockholm,
- Bruce Adams, Catalogue Essay, *Southern Reflections*, AGNSW/Kulturhuset, Stockholm
- Eva Runefelt, *Svenska Dagbladet*, Stockholm, 29 March
- Jessica Kempe, *Dagens Nyheter*, Stockholm, 8 April
- Crispin Ahlström, *Goteborg Posten*, Goteborg, 30 March
- Terry Ingram, *The Australian Financial Review*, Sydney, 21 May
- Jeffrey Makin, Review, *Melbourne Herald Sun*, 1 June,
- Michael Lawrence, *Framed: Photographs of Australian Artists*, Hardie Grant Books, Melbourne
- Courtney Kidd, "Public Art in Sydney", *Artlink* Vol.18 No.2

- 1999 Bruce James, *Handbook of the Collections*, Art Gallery of New South Wales
- Rachel Kent, 'Hilarie Mais', *Home and Away*, exhibition catalogue, Auckland City Art Gallery, NZ
- William McAloon, Cat. Essay, *Home and Away: Contemporary Australian and New Zealand Art from the Chartwell Collection*, Auckland City Art Gallery, NZ
- Klaus Susiluoto, "Australian Art in Choppy Seas", *Lansivayla*, 24 Feb
- Marja-Terttu Kivirinta, "Living Heart - Australian Modern Art Defines Mythical Desert", *Helsingin Sanomat*, 4th March
- Russell Millard, "Lightning Visit Worth \$40,000", *The Adelaide Advertiser*, 29 March
- "Visy Board Art Prize", *The Leader*, Adelaide 31 March
- Adam Dutkiewicz, "Democratic Success", *Adelaide Advertiser*, 14 April
- Susan McCulloch, "Guy Abrahams: Dealer in Optimism", *Australian Art Collector*, Issue 7
- 2000 Courtney Kidd, *Australian Painting Now*, Craftsman House, Sydney
- Felicity Fenner, 'Hilarie Mais: The Unlocked Grid', *Australian Art Collector Magazine*, Sydney
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- Courtney Kidd, "In the Frame", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June
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- Nicholas Jose, "Asian – Australian dialogues in the visual arts", *Art and Australia* Vol 38, No 4 p 592-597
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- 2002 Melanie Eastburn, 'Hilarie Mais: Time and Sculpture, Interview', *World Sculpture News*, Issue 12 April-June
- Hannah Shuckburgh, "Hilarie Mais", *Arts Review*, London, September Vol. LIII
- Zoja Bojic, *Imago Terrae Australis*
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- Janna Graber, "Walkabout", *American Style Magazine*
- Donald Williams, *In Our Own Image* (4th Edition), McGraw Hill

Suzanne Davies, catalogue essay, *Shell Collection of Contemporary Australian Art* (ex.cat)

Louise Martin-Chew, Review, *Fathoming: Contemporary Australian Sculpture*, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, *The Weekend Australian*

Felicity Fenner, *Australian Art Collector*

Peter Hill, "Hilarie Mais at Sherman Galleries", *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 13-19

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2003 Nick Waterlow, 'Conversations on the work of Hilarie Mais', *Art and Australia*, Vol. 41/2

2004 Peter Hill, 'The Grid as Self Portrait', *Hilarie Mais: Survey of Works, 1974-2004*, exhibition catalogue, ANU Drill Hall Gallery

Sasha Grishin, "Review", *The Canberra Times Arts & Entertainment*, May 31

Anne Sanders, "Hilarie Mais: Survey of works 1974-2004 at the ANU Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra", *Art Monthly Australia*, Number 174 October

Ashley Crawford, "Hilarie Mais", *Sunday Melbourne Age*, 11 April

Peter Hill, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Spectrum, April 25-25

Appendix 2.

List of plates

1.

Hilarie Mais

Glade 1975

Oil on canvas and wood

183 x137 x15 cm

Collection: the artist

© the artist

2.

Hilarie Mais

Weapons series 1980

(from left to right; *Washboard, Clasp, Scrape, Key, Bird, Weapon*)

Steel and tung oil, installation

Dimensions variable

Collection: the artist

© the artist

3.

Hilarie Mais

Past Imperfect 1984

Oil on wood, installation

Dimensions variable

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales

© the artist

4.

Kenneth Martin

Chance and Order VI 1976

Screenprint on paper

70.5 x 70.5 cm

Collection: Tate Gallery, London

© the estate of the artist

5.

Miriam Schapiro

Ox 1968

Acrylic on canvas

90 x 108 inches

Collection: Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego

© the artist

6.

Hilarie Mais

Pandora II 1979

Steel and tung oil

244 x 107 x 30 cm

Collection: Parliament House, Canberra

© the artist

7.

Hilarie Mais

Arachne 1978

Steel and oil paint

138 x 91 cm

Collection: Parliament House, Canberra

© the artist

8.

Hilarie Mais

Fence 1979

Steel and tung oil

153 x 5549 x 13 cm

Private collection, New York

© the artist

9.

Hilarie Mais

Divide: Variations 2004Oil on wood with mirrors and glass,
two units, 6 x 207 x 207 cm each

Courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries

© the artist

10.

Hilarie Mais

Bearing Effigy 1994Oil on wood and canvas,
two panels, 188 x 189 x 4 cm each

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales

© the artist

11.

Hilarie Mais

Pulse Line 2001Oil on wood,
two units, 91 x 201 x 15.5 cm each

Private collection, Melbourne

© the artist

12.

Hilarie Mais

Waiting 1984Oil on wood
124 x 182 x 5 cm

Private collection, Sydney

© the artist

13.

Hilarie Mais

Doors: The Maze 1987

Oil on wood, chain and door handles

204 x 223 x 9 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

14.

Hilarie Mais

Night Echoes 1997

Tondo, oil on wood

146 x 4.5 cm diameter

Private collection, Sydney

© the artist

15.

Fiona Hall

Temptation of Eve from the *Genesis* series 1984

Gelatin silver photograph

19.5 x 24.4 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

16.

Fiona Hall

Woman attempts to wake up the earth, Book XVII: Cultivated Trees, 1991 from the *Historia Non-naturalis* series

Polaroid photograph

50.8 x 70 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

17.

Frederick Sommer

Moon culmination 1951

Gelatin silver print

24.3 x 19.3 cm

Collection: George Eastman House Collection, Rochester, NY

© 2000 George Eastman House, Rochester, NY

18.

Frederick Sommer

Virgin and child, St. Anne and Infant St. John 1966

Gelatin silver photograph

24 x 20.5 cm

Collection: J.Paul Getty Trust

© the estate of the artist

19.

Fiona Hall

Words from the *Words* series 1989

Polaroid photograph

53.2 x 75.2 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

20.

Fiona Hall

Write from the *Words* series 1989

Polaroid photograph

53.2 x 75.2 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

21.

Fiona Hall

Ratio from the *Words* series 1989

Polaroid photograph

53.2 x 75.2 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

22.

Fiona Hall

Void from the *Words* series 1989

Polaroid photograph

53.2 x 60.8 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

23.

Fiona Hall

Celery (Apium graveolens) 1989 from the *Paradisus Terrestris* series

Aluminium and tin

24.5 x 11.0 x 1.5 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

24.

Fiona Hall

Passionfruit (Passiflora edulis) 1989 from the *Paradisus Terrestris* series

Aluminium and tin

24.5 x 11.0 x 1.5 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

25.

Fiona Hall

Black Boy (Xanthorrea australis) 1989 from the *Paradisus Terrestris* series

Aluminium and tin

24.5 x 11.0 x 1.5 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

26.

Fiona Hall

Medicine bundles for the non-born child 1993

Aluminium, rubber teats

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the Artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

© the artist

27.

Fiona Hall

Karra-wari (Pitjantjatjara), Eucalyptus microtheca, coolibah tree 1999 from the *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled* series

Aluminium and steel

24.5 x 11.0 x 1.5 cm

Courtesy of the Artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

© the artist

28.

Fiona Hall

Atnyem (Alyawar), Acacia kempeana, witchetty bush 1999 from the *Paradisus Terrestris Entitled* series

Aluminium and steel

24.5 x 11.0 x 1.5 cm

Courtesy of the Artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

© the artist

29.

Fiona Hall

Dumban (Bundajalung), Platyserium superbum, staghorn 1999 from the *Paradise Terrestriis Entitled* series

Aluminium and steel

24.5 x 11.0 x 1.5 cm

Courtesy of the Artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

© the artist

30.

Fiona Hall

Fern Garden 1998 (aerial view)

Dicksonia antarctica, river pebbles, concrete, wrought iron, water

Variable dimensions

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

© the artist

31.

Fiona Hall

Cash Crop 1998-99 from the *Fieldwork* series (detail)

Carved soap, painted banknotes, vitrine

115 x 130 x 55 cm vitrine dimensions

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales

© the artist

32.

Fiona Hall

Dead in the Water 1999 from the *Fieldwork* series

PVC pipe, glass beads, wire, vitrine

106.5 x 128 x 128 cm vitrine dimensions

Collection: National Gallery of Victoria

© the artist

33.

Fiona Hall

Drift Net 1998 from the *Fieldwork* seriesPVC pipe, glass beads, mother-of-pearl buttons, wire, engraved bottle, compass,
vitrine

129 x 160 x 76 cm vitrine dimensions

Courtesy of the Artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

© the artist

Appendix 3.

Plates

PLATE 1

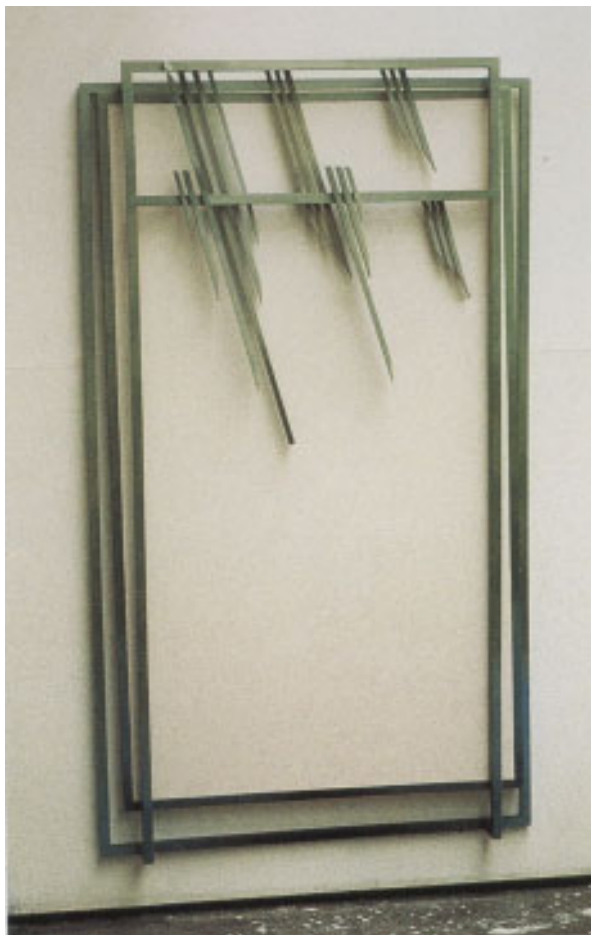


PLATE 2



PLATE 3

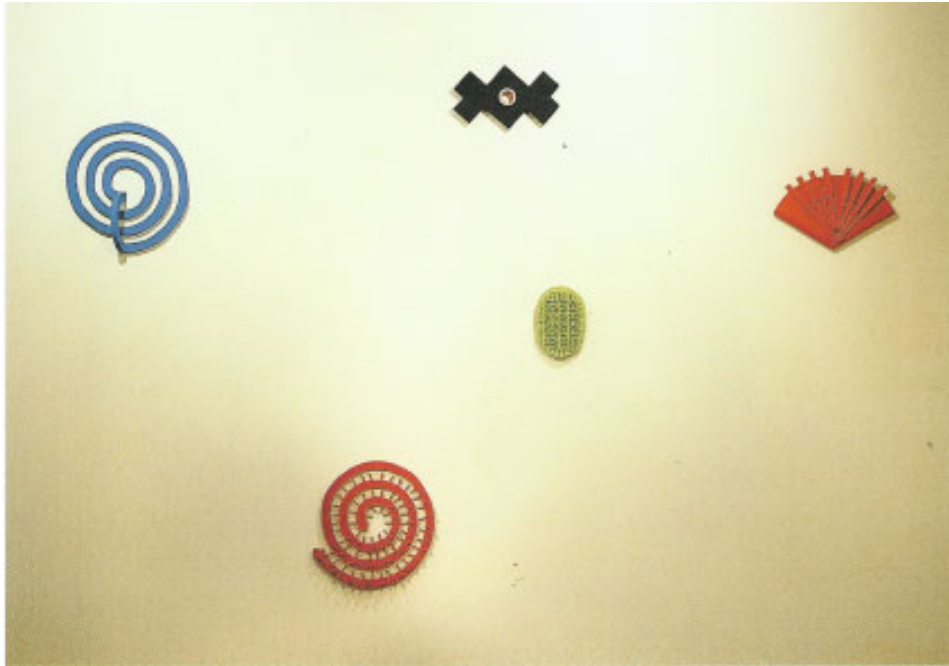


PLATE 4

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PLATE 5

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PLATE 6



PLATE 7

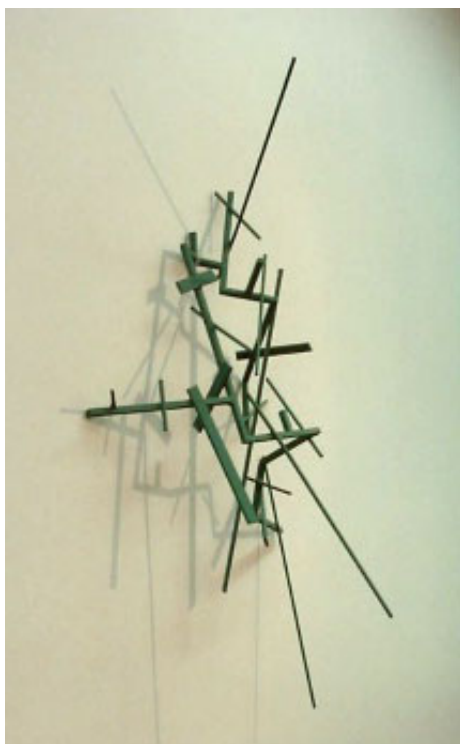


PLATE 8

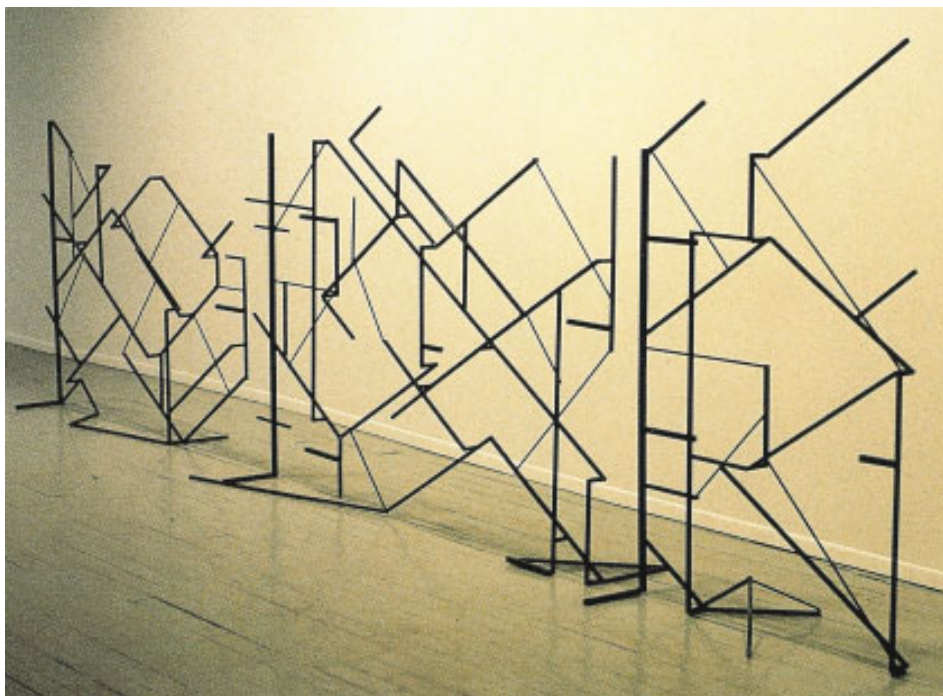


PLATE 9

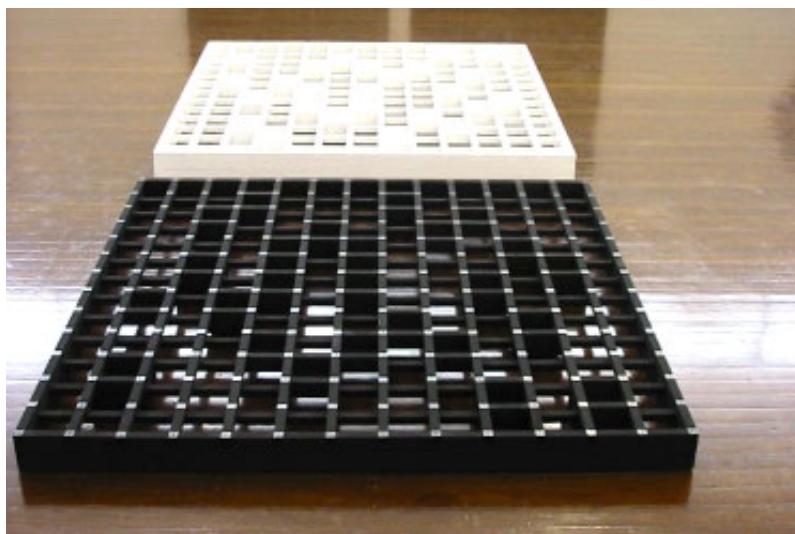


PLATE 10

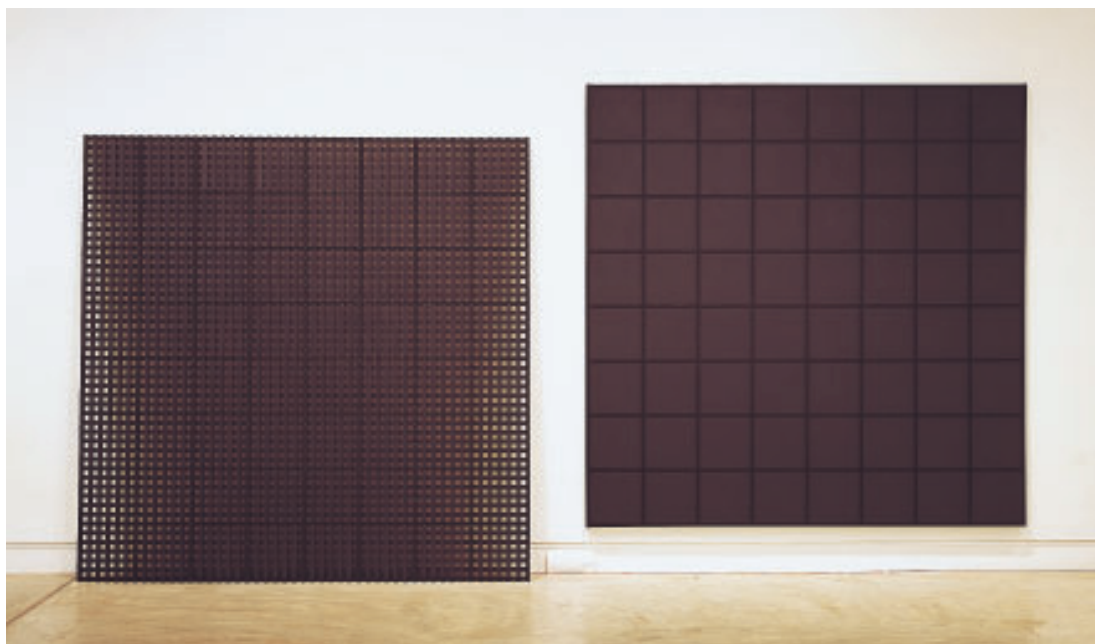


PLATE 11

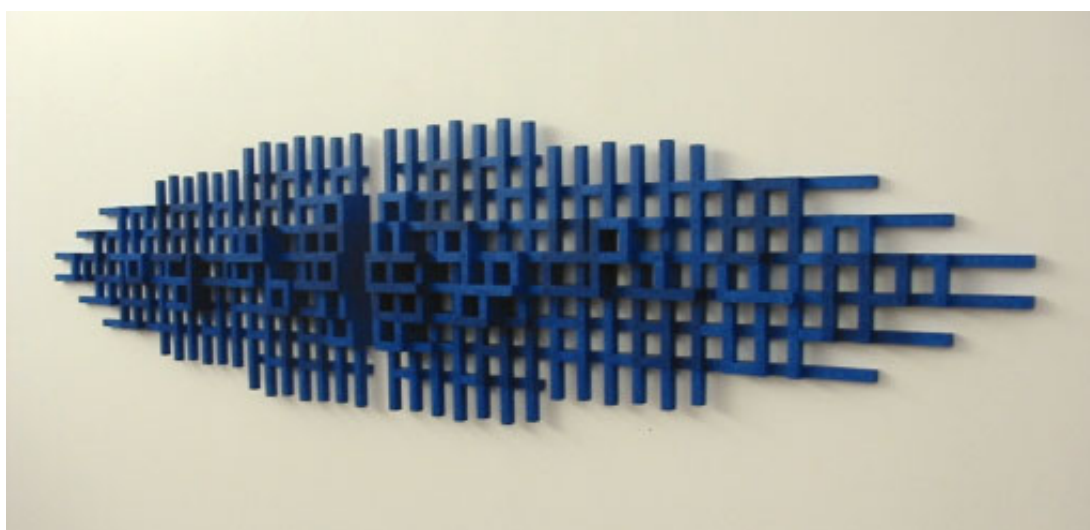


PLATE 12



PLATE 13

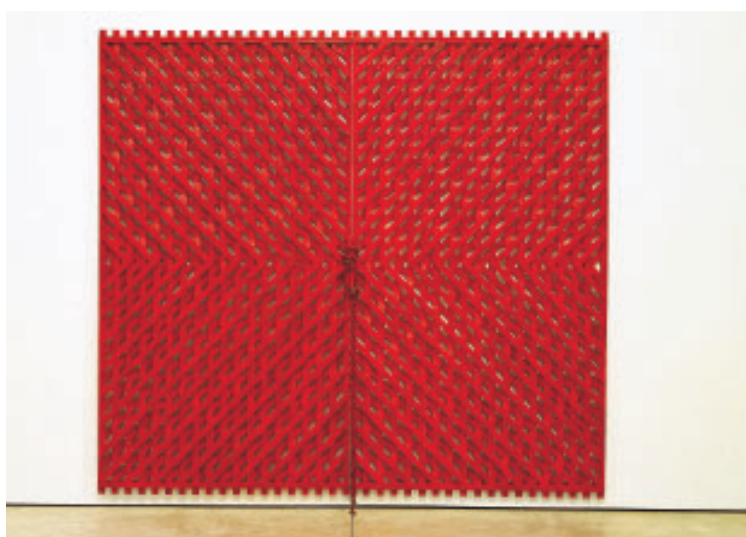


PLATE 14

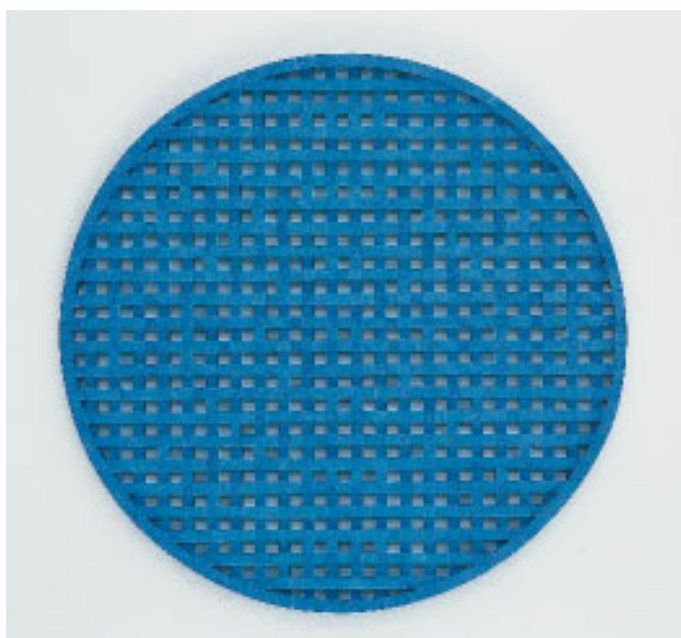


PLATE 15



PLATE 16



PLATE 17

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PLATE 18

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PLATE 21



PLATE 22



PLATE 19



PLATE 20



PLATE 23



PLATE 24



PLATE 25



PLATE 26



PLATE 27



PLATE 28



PLATE 29



PLATE 30



PLATE 31



PLATE 32



PLATE 33

